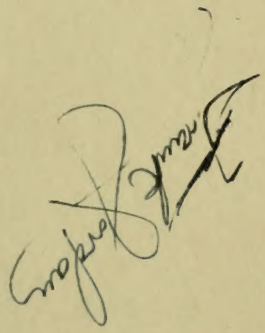

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THIRSTING
FOR THE SPRINGS

THIRSTING FOR THE SPRINGS

TWENTY-SIX WEEKNIGHT MEDITATIONS

BY

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FOREWORD

THE addresses in this volume were all originally published in the *Examiner* newspaper, and it was not intended by Mr Jowett that they should ever take more permanent form. They were found, however, to be so helpful and stimulating by a wide circle of readers, and so many requests for their republication were received, that it has been resolved to issue them in the present volume, with the hope that they may appeal for good to a still larger public. As they retain the form of spoken rather than written addresses, it is only due to the author that this much should be stated.

W. B. SELBIE
(*Editor of the "Examiner"*).

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THIRSTING FOR THE SPRINGS

WHY TELL IT?

TEXT: "*He made as though He would go further.*"—Luke 24: 28.

"HE made as though He would go further." Is there any ministry concealed in this apparently trifling incident? The Master knew whenever He turned aside into the disciples' house He would receive most hearty welcome and entertainment. "He knew what was in man," and He therefore discerned the grace of hospitality hidden in their hearts. He knew that they were hospitably disposed. Why, then, did He make "as though He would go further?" He wished to elicit a voluntary expression of their hospitality. They were not wanting in goodness; it only needed to be exercised. The hospitable disposition was not absent; it only required to be evoked. And so "He made as though

He would go further." The hidden goodness then sought expression. Feeling confessed itself in appropriate speech. The sentiment of hospitality found voice, "But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: because it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent."

"He made as though He would go further." The loving device was practised not for His own sake, but for the sake of the two disciples. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." It was not that He might obtain a night's lodging, but that they might obtain a larger heart. Goodness expressed is goodness confirmed. Hospitality uttered is hospitality enriched. Feelings that never find utterance may die from slow suffocation. To confess a sentiment is to strengthen it. To hide a sentiment may be to lose it. And so the purpose of the Master was to strengthen the better nature of His companions by eliciting its expression. These men were stronger and wealthier when their hospitality had uttered itself

at the gracious constrain of the Lord. And so, through this apparently meaningless incident we pass into a spacious principle. And the principle is this. If you wish to strengthen a feeling, express it; if you wish to destroy it, deprive it of a tongue. In the domain of gracious feeling expression is confirmation. The principle receives many applications from the Word of God, and it is to one or two of these applications that we will now direct our attention.

(1) *The Sentiment of Gratitude.*—Everybody is familiar with the repeated and urgent counsels of the Old Book calling us to the expressions of thanksgiving. "O give thanks unto the Lord." "O come let us sing unto the Lord." "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving." What occasion is there for this urgent and impetuous counsel? Is it not enough that we should feel grateful? Is not the very sentiment of gratitude creative of a delicious odour which is acceptable unto God? Why should I seek to give the feeling expression? Why

should I utter my thanks? Why should I sing? Questions like these imply a misinterpretation of the nature of feeling. Gratitude unexpressed, inevitably cools into apathy. To express our thanks is to augment our thankfulness. Of course I am not thinking of mere conventionalisms, of the hollow courtesies or the flippant graces which form the tinsel of ceremonial functions. I am speaking of the thanksgivings which find expression in sincere and serious speech. Now, let us see what such expression implies. In the first place, it necessitates the exercise of thought. Therefore, to express one's gratitude requires that a man be thoughtful. When I am about to express myself seriously concerning anything, the thing itself is looked at in quiet and fruitful deliberation. If I am about to speak to God concerning His bountiful gifts, which He has showered upon me, I shall be obliged to gaze thoughtfully at the gifts in long and helpful contemplation. That is why the Psalms which most abound in thanksgiving are most

alive and discerning as to the multitude of the mercies in which our life abounds. "When I seek to count them!" He is contemplating the marvellous succession of the Divine mercies. "Thy mercies are in the heavens, and Thy faithfulness reaches even unto the clouds." That is ever the influence of thought upon feeling. It vivifies it. If thought is alive, and bright, and definite, feeling will be quickened into intensity. If thought is dull and languid, feeling will assuredly be torpid.

> "When all Thy mercies, O my God,
> My rising soul surveys,
> Transported with the view, I'm lost
> In wonder, love, and praise."

I am therefore not surprised when I read the word of the Psalmist: "It is a good thing to give thanks!" "It is good to sing praises!" "A good thing!" It is not merely pleasant and welcome. It is healthy and nourishing. The ungrateful man may chill and pain his benefactor; but that is only a secondary evil. The

greater evil is that he maims himself. The ungrateful becomes evermore the dwarfed.

(2) *The matter of personal faith in Christ.* —Here again we move under the dominion of the same principle. We are strengthened by confession. If we only knew it, it is more difficult to be a secret disciple than an openly avowed follower of the Lord. Secrecy deprives us of the stimulus of publicity. It robs us of the supports that belong to a public confession. And so the Bible has a great deal to say concerning the giving of expression to our personal faith in Christ. "Everyone who shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God." That is not a veiled threat. It is a statement of cause and effect. The one makes me fitted in character for the other. It is the fitness of the officer for the office. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "For

with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God." "They that believed came and confessed." There must surely be something of gracious influence in this experience, or it would never be counselled with such strenuous urgency. All these quotations only re-emphasise the principle that inner sanctities are strengthened and enriched by open confession. A man's faith in God is fortified by the experience of confession. Just think of it for a moment. It is always a sound rule in life to regard one's shrinkings with intense suspicion. Our shrinkings are very frequently the index to urgent duties. I do not say that they are always so. A man's shrinkings may be the instinctive recoil of a refined and sanctified spirit. But a man's shrinkings may be, and very frequently are, the recoils of timidity and cowardice. I must, therefore, look closely at my duties, lest perchance they hide my duties. Now

men shrink from the public confession of Christ. Does the shrinking indicate a duty? Men will do anything, and will prefer anything, rather than make a public confession of their belief in the rights and kingship of Christ. And yet such a confession would often act with great spiritual energy in the counsels of the world. It would stop many an unfair conversation. It would dry up the applause from many a filthy jest, and expose the jester to the chilling reproof of a silent reception. It would elevate many an enterprise whose tendency was towards the dust. These would be some of the influences upon others; but what would be the influence upon self? It is difficult behaviour. Yes, and, therefore, presumably the right. It is usually safe to give the preference to the difficult path. It is the "narrow way" that leads to the kingdom. It is in the way of difficulty that faith finds its most nutritious food. Public confession is a kind of public pledge, a public consecration of life; and consecration always

means amplification. By consecration my life is prepared and enlarged for the reception of the wondrous ministries of the Holy Ghost. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus . . . *thou shalt be saved.*" The great exercise will stir up and strengthen the forces of salvation within thee, and thou shalt assuredly be led to the perfected life.

(3) *The Declaration of Christian experience.*—I have had certain experiences in my fellowship with God. He has graciously given me unveilings of truth. New lights have broken upon my eyes from old lamps. I have come upon new wells of consolations. What shall I do with them? If I want to enrich them I must make them known. Our experiences become the more precious when we share them with our fellows. It is the witness who is first blessed in witness-bearing. Here, again, confession is amplification. "Come and hear, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul." "I have not hid Thy righteousness within

my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation." "I have not concealed Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth from the great congregation." "I have not *hid* . . . I have *declared*!" "I have not *concealed* . . . I have *told*!" It is this "declaring" and this "telling" which I am afraid is so lacking in our modern religious life. We have little of the testimony meeting. We have little of the "speaking to one another" of the Lord's dealings in personal life. I am persuaded that we are great losers by the abstinence. Who can tell what it might mean to others if we opened out to them a little of our secret intercourse with God? To quietly tell some man how the Lord found and redeemed you! To quietly tell some heart-broken mother how, after many tears and many prayers, your own lad was reclaimed! To quietly testify what the Lord did for you in the time of your sorrow, and how you saw a bright angel in the dark grave! To quietly tell how the Lord lifted you out of the miry clay and set

your feet upon a rock! What might be the influence of all this upon the hearer, who can measure? As to the influence upon the witness himself, I am persuaded that his experiences would be enriched even while he witnessed. The meal in the barrel would be multiplied even while he distributed it. The witness himself would have to say: "The half hath not been told!"

THIRSTING FOR THE SPRINGS

TEXT: "*Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.*"—John 4: 14.

THIS is a suitable place at which to take our stand if we wish to raise the question, who is this Jesus, man or God? Is He a particularly beautiful offshoot of the Jewish race, rudely cut off when He was blossoming into a maturity of unexampled loveliness, or is He the great Eternal, enshrined in a vesture of time? This is a fitting place for such question to be asked. What is the claim? "I am life's water, I am life's bread." Does He mean just what He says? Does He use figures and metaphors loosely, or do they represent with scrupulous accuracy the inmost truth of things? Bread! Water! I cannot do without them. Then the Master will not permit himself to be regarded as the superfluity at life's meals. He is not an indifferent addition to life, but an elemental

and fundamental necessity. He claims to be something that we cannot do without. "Without Him we cannot live." There will be nothing worthy to be called by the large and sovereign term of "Life." We shall be starvelings, weaklings, pinched and pining, full of hungers and thirsts, creeping along upon the confines of moral and spiritual death.

Such is one aspect of this stupendous claim. Now look at it from a slightly different angle. This man Jesus asserts that if He be regarded as bread and water, if He be taken and used as the common food of the common day, He will annihilate all the hungers and thirsts of the soul, which are now the sources of so much disquietude and pain. "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Let us pause, that we may attempt to grasp the significance of this mighty claim. Let us call the roll of a few of the hungers and thirsts which this man claims to have the power to appease.

Here is a thirst of the soul. It is *the thirst for assurance.* It is born of feverishness. There is a feverishness of the spirit, as well as of the flesh. We are familiar with the symptoms of the feverish body —the accelerated pulse, the throbbing head, the tossing restlessness, and all these have their analogies in their feverish soul. There are souls that are "heated hot with burning fears." Fears are in their minds and hearts like burning firebrands, and they eat and inflame the entire life. What kind of fears are these? The Master has named them, "Anxieties about tomorrow"; and when one of these blazing brands gets into the soul, it creates a feverishness which drys the life with a consuming thirst. Feverishness in the soul is a condition just the opposite to what the Scriptures describe as a "cool spirit." Feverishness in the soul is a condition of panic, a state of dread, a dry, hot unrest, a thirst for assurance. "He that believeth on Me shall never thirst." He creates a cool spirit. He puts out the firebrand of

fear. He annihilates dread. He takes the threat out of the morrow. He gives assurance. "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink."

Here is another thirst. It is the "*lust of bliss.*" I can use no milder term, for a milder term would leave the greater thing unsaid. It is not merely that we thirst for bliss, there are multitudes of souls which lust for it. There are men and women in every city who do not care what they ignore, or what they destroy, so long as they can obtain a mouthful of bliss! I am sometimes tempted to believe that it is one of the most perilous signs of the times. We have to make everything pleasant to entice the palates of men. We are in danger of changing the strait and narrow way into a way of light and pleasing entertainment, and of smothering the hard, grim, bloody Cross under an avalanche of flowers. I am not surprised at the thirst; is it the Nemesis of wilfulness. If men deliberately turn themselves away from the river of water of life, they do not destroy

their thirst, they only pervert it, and turn it into a lust for the puddles! That is it, with many of us it has become a lust for the puddles! "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." The thirst for bliss shall be more than gratified by the gift of blessedness, and the lust for the puddles shall be quenched in the attainment of God's pleasures, in an abiding by the river of water of life.

Here is another thirst. Let us call it *the thirst for the springs*. Do what we like, waste what we please, pervert what we choose, there is always a reminder within us that points us toward God. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" It may be only that; a discontent, a little disquietude, just a tiny vacancy in the soul, which we cannot fill up with the things of time. It is the indestructible reminder to keep us in thought of God. "My soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease." Ease! Yes, if only I could

get rid of that vague and pervading yearning which steals into the finest of earth's feasts, and turns all its revelry into a painful insufficiency. It is the indestructible remnant; say rather, it is the God-created thirst for the springs.

God has made the grass very juicy for the kine, but the juices of the grass do not make the kine independent of the water brooks. Even amid the luscious pastures they thirst for the still waters, and they make their way to the brink, and, standing knee-deep, bathe and refresh themselves in the gracious stream. And God has made some things very juicy for His children, in order that the juiciness itself might minister to our delight in growth. The beauty of nature; the entrancing ministry of music—how very juicy God has made them—but even in these luxurious pastures the soul thirsts for the springs. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." You may linger in the juicy grass, but you won't destroy the thirst. The thirst for

the springs will persist and remain, a vague yearning, a painful disquietude, which will haunt you even to the end. Now let us hear the Lord: "He that believeth on Me" hath found the springs. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst."

Here is another thirst. What shall we call it? It is *the thirst of the exile*, the thirst of the prodigal, the longing for home. We have a word, most wealthy in its suggestiveness, which offers itself here as an all-sufficient term. We call it home-sickness. Have you ever looked into it? Home-sickness! The sickness of the exile, a fainting because of absence from the old hearth, a yearning to see the old face and to hear once again the sweet familiar voice, a thirsting for home! And how much more poignant and painful is the thirst when the absence is born of rebelliousness and sin! God has such self-exiled ones. They roam through the land to-day in unnumbered crowds, and they are home-sick, thirsting for the satis-

factions which are to be found only in their father's house. They have wasted their substance in riotous living. They have spent all. They are in want. They are burdened with a disquieting thirst. Christ claims to be able to appease that thirst. To be with Him is to be at home again, and to be at rest. "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest," home-rest; the great sick longing shall be changed into a sweet content, and the feverish thirst shall be quenched in the glorious fellowship of God.

There is one other thirst I would like to name. Let us call it *the thirst for completeness*, for holiness, for health. I thirst to make this life of mine, which is so large in promise, and so varied in faculty, as capacious and as wealthy as from its own suggestiveness I think it might be. This thirst for completeness finds its satisfaction in Christ. The missing thing, for which I pant, I shall find in Him. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, the deaf

hear, and the dead are raised up." In Christ is the pledge of our perfectness, and the thirst for holiness is only consummated in Him.

I would therefore lead you to the fountain. Every other river has its seasons of drought. Every other spring runs dry. Other resources will fail us. They will not redeem their promise. They will aggravate the very thirst they profess to relieve. Let us take our thirst to the Eternal spring, and find rest and contentment and health in there abiding.

THE DEGENERACY OF A SOUL

TEXT: Psalm 12.

"*HELP, Lord!*" This is the wailing supplication of a soul oppressed with the degeneracy of society. Disease has broken out in the body corporate. The commonwealth is rotting. Human fellowships are falling to pieces. Wickedness is triumphant, and the smothering contagion is imperilling the peace and vitality of the saints. "Help, Lord!" It is a cry for security amid an evil epidemic. It is an appeal for divine reinforcement amid prevalent collapse. It is the prayer of the individual, threatened by the engulfing floods of moral and spiritual degeneracy.

This Psalm marks off the steps of social degradation. The steps of transition are clearly indicated. We can see the progressive descents from the worship of God to the exaltation of vileness. Sense after sense is benumbed; nerve after nerve is

atrophied; perception after perception is impaired; until the entire body of human relationships, which was intended by God to be the home of all manner of refined and delicate sympathies, becomes a mass of hard and callous selfishness, in which all the ties of rarer communion are destroyed.

I do not propose to regard these stages of decline in their relationship to society, but in their relationship to the individual. Society only reflects the individual man. What we find in the one, we may translate into the other. Let us then regard the passage as a vivid description of the degeneracy of a soul. At the one extreme we have the worship of God; at the other extreme we have the exaltation of wickedness. What is the first stage in this appalling decline? Where does the decay begin?

The decay of the sense of reverence. "The godly man ceaseth." The beginning of degeneracy is to lose touch with God. We lose our touch of God when we cease to "feel after Him." It is the effort to feel, that preserves the sensitive touch. The

intense effort to discern a thing through the finger tips gives the blind almost a new sense, and the intense striving to feel God, endows the soul with the powers of fine apprehension. It is here that so many of us fail in the attainment of a lofty spirituality. We only exercise ourselves in "feeling," in the crisis and emergencies of life, and as these are only of rare occurrence, our exercisings are infrequent. Men who are to become spiritual experts in apprehending God, must feel after Him through the commonplaces of the ordinary day. They must feel after Him in their daily bread, in the humble duty, in lowly affection, in the little ministries of the obscure way. They must feel after Him in prayer, in aspiration, in meditation. They must "practise the presence of God," that in the persistent groping after Him, they may attain unto a sensitiveness of touch that perceives Him everywhere. If we give up the practice, if we only feel after Him in the great contingency, in the hour of sorrow, in the shadow of bereavement,

in the heavy disappointment, and if we are indolent and sluggish in the long level road of the commonplace, we shall lose our touch of God, and shall inevitably become ungodly.

The decay of the sense of honour. "Faithfulness faileth from among the children of men." "Faithfulness faileth"; the dependableness of character is impaired. When reverence is benumbed, trustfulness is broken. When men lose the sense of the august, they lose the sense of the honourable. They do not fulfil their promise. They are no longer what Martin Luther called "the Amen folk"; they do not support their speech by the strong steady buttress of their life. They become insincere. And note how the insincerity blossoms where all character reveals itself, upon the lips. "They speak vanity everyone with his neighbour." The conversation is full of emptinesses, trivialities, nothings. When the eternal goes out of life, speech is not preserved in its greatness. The little life spends and exhausts itself in little topics.

"With flattering lip and with a double heart do they speak." Not only is the subject matter of speech belittled, but the speech itself is perverted, and rendered insincere. With the loss of reverence men lose the sense of the sacredness of words. Flattery is usually associated with its still more diseased companion, duplicity. It was a quaint saying of an old Puritan that "Flattery is the sign of the Inn of which Duplicity is the host." The flatterer speaks with a double heart. He has one heart for your face, and another for behind your back. One for the Church, and another for the market. His nerve of honour is no longer finely sensitive, and is either dying or dead.

The decay of the sense of responsibility. "Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?" The decay of reverence leads to the perversion of honour; the perversion of honour destroys the sense of responsibility. Men become self-centred, and therefore blinded. They see their own desires, but they do not recognise their brother's

rights. Their own appetites bulk large, but they have no vision of their brother's needs. They see their possessions; they do not recognise the responsibility of possessions. "Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?" How much more beautiful it were to say, "My lips are my own, but for the service of my brother! What can I say to help him? What message can I take to comfort him? What song can I sing to cheer him? My hands are my own, but for the service of my brother! How can I use them to enrich him? What letter can I write to encourage him? What gift can I take to inspire him? My feet are my own, but for the use of my brother! What errand can I run to serve him? What journey can I take to save him?" Such is the responsible use of possessions. When reverence is alert, and honour is active, my brother stands revealed in the clearest light, and the sense of responsibility is creative of manifold ministries for his good.

The decay of the sense of humanity.

"The spoiling of the poor, the sighing of the needy." Where irresponsibility reigns, cruelty abounds. When men lose the sense of fellowship with their brethren, they tramp through life regardless of the cries of those whom they may crush beneath their heel. The birth of cruelty synchronises with the death of reverence. Cruelty will never lurk where reverence dwells. The saints are the very homes of kindliness, therefore am I comforted with the words, "The saints shall judge the earth." There will be no harshness and no severity in that judgment. Masters are never cruel where they revere their servants. Husbands can never be unkind when there is reverence for the wife. But when reverence is gone, and honour is impaired, and responsibility is dead, the sense of humanity withers away and men become as hard as flint.

The decay of the sense of right. "Vileness is exalted." This is the last stage in the appalling degradation. Evil at length becomes man's God. He enthrones it,

pays homage to it, finds all his delight in it. He no longer knows it to be evil. He has lost his moral discernment. The talent has been taken away. He calls good evil and evil good. He calls the sweet bitter and the bitter sweet. He wallows in wickedness and loves it, and the kingdom of sin has become the realm of his delights. "My soul, come out thou into his secret!" Such then is the darkening path of degeneracy. A soul loses its reverence for God, and at last pays willing homage to the devil. From irreverence and through unfaithfulness and irresponsibleness and inhumanity, the soul descends to the absolute worship of vice.

How can we be saved from this perilous decline? First of all let this be said: The wish to be saved is the beginning of salvation. "Exercise thyself unto godliness." Exercise thyself in feeling, and thou shalt become an expert in touching. Everywhere and at all times be reaching out for God. Feel for Him in thy pleasures, in thy pains, in thy failures, in thy conquests, in

thy noontides, and in thy midnights. Pray for Him everywhere; "pray without ceasing," and thy little life shall be filled with the presence of the divine, girding it with power, and making it fragrant with the delightful perfumes of grace. How can I be assured of this? "We have God's own promise, and that cannot fail." He will "keep" us; He will hedge us about in strong defence. He will "preserve" us; He will give us sustenance, even the very bread of life. "Hath He not promised, and shall He not do it?" The good Lord is dependable. He is better than His word, and "the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times."

STAYING THE PLAGUE!

TEXT: "*Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.*"—Psalm 91 : 10.

WE move amid moral pestilences. Plague-stricken people are all around us. We are daily in contact with men and women who are afflicted with moral and spiritual diseases. The diseases are highly contagious. How are we to escape them? "Evil communications corrupt." Is that true always? "He went to be guest." Was He corrupted? Was He smitten? Did the evil contagion find lodgment in Him? Evil communications do not always corrupt. Contagion demands prepared conditions. If the conditions are absent, the contagion is impotent. "The prince of this world cometh, and *hath nothing in Me.*" There were no appropriate conditions. There was no congenial soil. The devil could find no footing. The evil microbe could discover no sustenance. The secret of healthy

living consists in the exercise of care lest we lapse or degenerate into conditions which will be congenial to the germs of moral and spiritual disease.

We have now had twenty-five years of bacteriological investigation. Profound research has been devoted to the infancy and growth of disease. The preparatory conditions in which the microbes find their sustenance have been laboriously studied, and some fruitful conclusions have been established. Now the flesh is more than a vesture. It is a literature. It is an assembly of parabolic hints. It offers suggestions as to the creation of a well-ordered soul. Here, then, are two or three of the prepared conditions which offer a foothold to encroaching disease.

I. PHYSICAL EXHAUSTION.

The natural forces are reduced. The energy is spent. The army is recalled from the walls. The gates are left undefended, and the enemy has an easy access. Our physical defences are constituted out of

the natural resistance of the body. Impoverish these, and our security is gone. Let me change the analogy. In the physical life our income must be a little above our expenditure. Physical exhaustion means that the emphasis has been changed. We have got an inlet with a one-inch bore, and we have got an outlet of one and a half. How is exhaustion to be interpreted? Some sources of income have ceased. Some correspondence has been severed. Perhaps the correspondence has been broken with the restoring realm of rest. We have gone on grinding and grinding until the energy has been spent. Then comes along the microbe and settles itself in the congenial conditions of weakness, and extends the insidious distribution of some most crippling disease.

How is it with the soul? Its defences are its resistances. If the soul is strong and powerful and energetic, the microbe of evil will gain no footing. But the soul can become faint, its defences may be straitened, and the stronghold may be easily taken at the first besiegement of the

evil one. How does the soul become exhausted? By the breaking of the correspondence with the land of rest. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" "Return unto thy rest." We are made to hold communion with the restoring centres of rest. By prayerfulness and by spiritual meditation the communion is kept established. But, if the communion be broken, the soul sinks into spiritual weakness and exhaustion, and the microbe of a temptation or suggestion, finding us defenceless, fattens on our weakness, and holds us in the bondage of a foul and appalling disease. Men easily capitulate to the devil when by prayerlessness they have reduced themselves to spiritual exhaustion.

II. BAD FOOD.

Diet is not altogether an indifferent matter in reference to the advances of disease. Some foods are the friends of our foes. They encourage the plague. They prepare its way. They arrange congenial conditions. It is not otherwise with

the spirit. Diet is not a matter of indifference. What kind of food do we give the mind? Is it possible we may be predisposing the mind to easy surrender to moral disease? How about our reading? Is the food good, or is it unsound meat? Can we honestly expect our minds to be healthy with the kind of food we give them? "God gave them bread from heaven to eat." "I am the Bread." The Master's bread is not all to be found within the province of one book. He has given His bread to His disciples, and they distribute it to the multitudes. He has given His bread to poets, to singers, to artists. My counsel is this: Pick your bread; do not eat whatever comes. Be even more careful in dieting the spirit than in feeding the body. "This is the bread of which if a mean eat *he shall not die.*"

III. UNDISCIPLINED EMOTION.

The investigations of the last twenty years have revealed this as one of the predisposing conditions of physical disease.

Excessive grief and worry have exhausted the body and thrown its gates open to the invading germs. Little griefs can despoil the body. It is the dropping tap which empties the cistern. Little by little men get run down, and make themselves easy victims to any plague that may be prowling about. How is it with the soul? Is not undisciplined emotion one of the predisposing conditions of spiritual collapse? Unregulated emotion impoverishes the spiritual defences. It becomes our enemy rather than our friend. The devil likes to get our emotions well stirred, and to make us pleased with our emotions, and then behind our satisfaction he carries on his nefarious work. It is one of the perils of great evangelical missions. Mere emotionalism weakens our defences, and leaves us more disposed to the devices of the devil. Emotionalism has often proved the forerunner and helpmeet of the plague, and has provided conditions which have been converted into domains of widespread spiritual disease.

IV. UNCLEANNESS.

Perhaps this is one of the greatest discoveries of the realm of surgery during the present generation. We have come to see, as never before, the absolute necessity of the most scrupulous cleanliness. Microbes love dirt. Our surgeons are, therefore, exactingly careful that all their operations are performed with sterilised instruments, and under the severest conditions of cleanliness. The smallest remnant of dirt gives an advantage to disease. How is it with the soul? There is need of a similar scrupulousness. Do we exercise the same scrupulousness? Do we not treat small scruples lightly? Do we not label them as puritanical? Do we not compromise in the matter? Many of us become the victims of the plague because at first we harbour, not deliberate or intentional wrongs, but little biases towards the devil. We make little compromises in his favour. We retain a dirty little prejudice, or some mean little policy which we persuade ourselves cannot be called wrong, but only expedient, and

these retained uncleannesses afford occasion and opportunity to the evil one, and through the entrance thus obtained he leads on his forces of darkness, the strong and black battalions of hell. If we are to defeat the enemy, we shall have to attend to the scruple. One defilement, deliberately treasured, may ensure the absolute triumph of the plague. "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

Let me add one or two closing words. Here is a suggestive sentence from a text-book of science:—"The most universal and active and economical agent of sanitation is the sun." The worst enemy of the microbe is the sunlight. It is the room that gets but little sunshine which becomes fusty. And is all this not true in the regions of the soul? Our light is our defence. "The Lord God is a Sun"; and, therefore, "a shield." Let us put on the "armour of light." "Walk in the light." It is the light that burns up the destructive invader. "Our God is a consuming fire."

THE PASSING OF THE BURDEN

TEXT: "*Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*"—Psalm 55 : 22.

THIS is a stormy psalm, abounding in threat, indignation, fear, and pain. The tempest rages right up to the confines of my text. Here, in the text, there is a temporary lull in the violence of thought and feeling. The driven, terrified pilgrim is becoming possessed by the recovering light of assurance, and the trembling heart is quieted into momentary peace. In the earlier outbursts the Psalmist is meditating relief from his burden by the way of flight. "Oh, had I the wings of a dove, then would I fly away." We have all known the inclination. We all know the critical moment when we are contemplating seeking relief by leaving our tasks. "I will just leave the whole thing. I will get away from it!" Such flight is usually fruitless.

We carry our burden with us. On the further shore it sits upon us still. And yet there are some types of burden in which the refuge of flight will be found to be a rare and splendid defence. "*Flee youthful lusts.*" In these matters flight is the only method of salvation. There are some atmospheres in which evil desire inevitably becomes irritated and inflamed. Our only refuge is to get away from them. Flee from any oil that would feed the unclean desire. If you are inclined to be feverish, passionate, voluptuous, flee from the inflammatory material on which the temper is fed. Get away from inflammatory books. Give up inflammatory companionships. Seek refuge by flight. "Flee from idolatry." Do not take part for a moment in the temple worship of an alien god. Do not sit in the temple of Mammon. Do not play with worldly maxims. Do not think there is security in partial worldliness, in a moderate compromise. We do not need to wear the entire dress of a smallpox victim in order to acquire the disease. A

bit of ribbon will do it! And if we presumably turn our backs upon the world and the worship of Mammon, and yet retain and hug one worldly expediency or practice, we shall be accounted the followers of an alien god.

But the majority of burdens cannot be disposed of by the method of flight. In flight they are our inseparable companions. We have no resources but to cast them on God. What becomes of them when we take them to the Lord? There are some burdens which pass away, even while they are being recounted. They evaporate in the telling! To talk about them to God is to lose them! If you take a dimmed, steamed mirror into a dry, sunny room, the obscuring veil passes away, and the mirror becomes clear. And there are some burdens which perplex the spirit, and hinder its outlook, which, when we take them to the Lord, pass away like mist in the sunny light of the morning. Let me mention two or three.

There is the burden of fearfulness. What

is this burden except the lack of assurance? The depression is born of uncertainty. The soul moves in fear, because it does not feel the presence of God. The lack of assurance breeds the restless offspring of anxiety, fretfulness, and care. Now this is one of the burdens which evaporate in the telling. Fearfulness is always the companion of little faith. The Master has told us this in a very significant sentence. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" The largeness of the one term is always proportioned to the smallness of the other. If we have little faith, we must have large fearfulness. If we have triumphant faith, fearfulness is abolished. "Perfect love casteth out fear." While we are talking to our Father, the sweet genius of assurance returns. Our faith awakes. Our love revives. The heart grows calm in spiritual fellowship. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," and, even while thou art telling it, the burden will disappear.

There is the burden of perplexity. Here, again, is a burden which frequently dis-

appears while we are describing it. If we take it into our Father's house, even if it does not pass entirely away, it will be so eased that it will not crush us like an iron garment. We shall have freedom of movement. It is a beautiful experience in the lives of the saints that, when they take their burden to God, they frequently find the clue even while they are bowed in prayer. The atmosphere of devotion is favourable to revelations, and visions are multiplied when souls are upon their knees. "When I thought how I might know this, it was too painful for me . . . *until I went into the sanctuary of God.*" He took his perplexity into the presence of God, and considered it in the atmosphere of the sanctuary, and the pain and the burden of it were gone! "In Thy light shall we see light."

There is the burden of guilt. No man can reverently and penitently take this burden to the Lord without losing it. It goes in the telling of it. "Father, I am no more worthy to be called thy son, make . . ."

"Bring forth the best robes." The confession of ignoble sonship had not been fully uttered before the father called for the robes of restored salvation. "So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up to the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulder, and fell from off his back." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord."

And yet there are some burdens which are not removed even when we take them to the Lord. They do not disappear in the telling. Is there some other gracious ministry of the loving Lord? Yes, if the burden remain, the bearer of it will be strengthened. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh. . . . Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me, and He hath said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee." The Apostle cast his burden upon the Lord. He asked that it might be removed. The burden remained, but the Apostle was strengthened! "Most gladly therefore I glory in my weakness." This is the way of the Lord. Some burdens are permitted

to remain. Perhaps the burden is an unwelcome and unpleasant duty. Perhaps it is some physical infirmity. Perhaps it is prolonged labour in a wageless and most exhausting sphere. What then will God do with us? "*He shall sustain thee.*" The Lord will deal with the bearer of the burden. He will increase thy strength, and so in reality diminish thy load. This word "sustain" is a fine, wealthy word of most comforting content. There is in it a suggestion of the ministry of a nurse. He will deal with us as though we were infants. He will be to us the great mother-God. And He will manifest towards us all the tenderness of a nursing ministry. There is also in the word the suggestion of food. He will feed us. He will give to us the bread of life. He will increase our vitality. He will make our powers more alive, more wakeful, more exuberant. And I find in the word the further gracious meaning of "support." He will carry me, if need be. "Hold Thou me up!" cries one of the Psalmists. The word indicates one of the

beautiful ministries of our Lord. We have seen the strong elder son taking the arm of his weakly mother, and holding her up. The kindly service is illustrative of the helpful fellowship of God. "He is at thy right hand."

The concluding word of the text is purposed to heighten the assurance of the Psalmist into the peace of absolute certainty. "*He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*" The life that is held by God, possessed and inspired by God, will be delivered from all trembling uncertainties. On the one hand, he will not be dismayed by a frown or a threat; nor, on the other hand, will he be enticed by some bewitching fascination. He will continue his way unmoved. The road will be straight; the walk will be firm; his footing will be sure. The Bible appears to exult in its proclamation of the fine, confident "walk" of the man who companies with God. He does not move with the trembling solicitude of one who steps upon miry clay, but he strides out with the confident step of a

man whose way is upon rock. This is ever the issue of intimate fellowship with the Lord. Men are delivered from fearfulness, and fickleness, and weakness. Their hearts are encouraged and lightened, and the heavy burden becomes a tolerable load. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

ALTARS AND ALTAR FIRES

TEXT: "*The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God.*"—1 Kings 18: 24.

I SUPPOSE that the altars built by Elijah and the prophets of Baal would be very much alike. To all outward seeming they were equally promising, and we should have been unable to surmise to which of them the fire would be sent. Anybody can build an altar; we need a God for the creation of a fire! Now it is just that flame-element which the Christian religion claims to be able to provide. It claims to be judged by its ability to kindle and inflame, to turn the cold altar into the place of living fire. When I have built my little heap of stones, the Lord God will consummate my erection in hallowed flame. God will supply the essential, the element of inspiration, the radiant gift which will convert the little altar into His own dwelling-place and sanctuary.

(1) Anyone can build an altar; it requires a God to provide the flame. *Anybody can build a house; we need the Lord for the creation of a home.* A house is an agglomeration of bricks and stones, with an assorted collection of manufactured goods; a home is the abiding-place of ardent affection, of fervent hope, of genial trust. There is many a homeless man who lives in a richly furnished house. There is many a fifteen-pound house in the crowded street which is an illuminated and beautiful home. The sumptuously furnished house may only be an exquisitely sculptured tomb; the scantily furnished house may be the very hearthstone of the eternal God. Now the Christian religion claims to be able to convert houses into homes, to supply the missing fire, and to bring an aspiring flame to the cold and chilling heap. The New Testament does not say very much about homes; it says a great deal about the things that make them. It speaks about life and love and joy and peace and rest! If we get a house and put these into it, we shall

have secured a home. Here, then, are two houses. In both of them there is no love, no joy, no peace, no rest. There is no flame of geniality and radiant hope. Let us bring the Christian religion into one of the houses, and do as you please with the other. In one house the tenants shall all kneel before King Jesus. They shall be one in common purpose, and they shall strive together with common mind and will. What will assuredly happen? With absolute certainty the house will become a home! That is a glorious common-place in the history of the Christian faith. Where Christ has been enthroned, and every member of the family becomes a worshipper, there steals into the common life a warmth of affection which converts even trivial relationships into radiant kinships. What shall we do with the other house? Sin reigns! Passion reigns! Estrangement reigns! There is continued tumult and unrest. What shall we do? Call upon Baal! Call upon "the god of this world!" It would be a fruitless quest. There is

nothing for it but the grace of Christ. God changes houses into homes; let Him be God.

(2) *Anyone can proclaim a moral ideal; we need the Lord for the creation of moral enthusiasm.* I suppose in fundamental ethics there is not a single person in my congregation who has any need of instruction. Probably we could all become teachers. What need is there for teaching about such matters as lust, falsehood, and avarice? Everybody knows all about them. But the possession of a moral ideal does not necessarily transfigure the life. A man might draw up, for the guidance of his fellowmen, an exalted code, and yet he may be the most notorious scamp in the city. The man who compiles the moral headlines in the copy books which our little ones have to transcribe may yet be the deepest-dyed villain who walks the ways of men. You may have a neatly printed list of moral maxims standing beside your calendar upon the desk of your counting-house, and yet they may no more influence your com-

mercial life than does the wall paper which covers the walls. The erection of moral ideals is the building of an altar. Now we want the flame, the fire of a passionate moral enthusiasm. Where shall we get the fire? We exalt our moral ideals in the minds of our children, but how shall we get them to love the right, and to fervently aspire after it? The Christian religion claims to answer the question. Here are two lives. In both of them there is knowledge of the moral ideal. In both of them the character is immoral. Let us bring the Christian religion to the one, and you shall do as you please with the other. "He will baptize with the Holy Ghost, *and with fire.*" The issue of fellowship with the Christ is to be the inspiration, whose influence shall be felt like fire. Love becomes a factor in the life, and cold duty becomes a fervent delight. How will you deal with the other man? How will you bring to him the fire? I confess I know no answer. Apart from the Christ, there seems to be no way of bringing fire on to cold altars.

The Lord brings the spirit of burning, which makes aspiration fervent, and consumes away the indwelling filth. "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God."

(3) *Any nation can make legal enactments against crime. We need the law to make men hate it.* The only defence against crime is not a punitive law, but a passionate, spiritual recoil. If we would deliver men from sin, we must make them loathe it. Some way or other we must kindle a holy hatred in man, the fire of blazing indignation. There are many men who are kept from crime, who nevertheless do not dislike it. Abolish the police, and at the moment of abolition, these men would stretch out their hands and grasp the forbidden fruit. But virtue created by fear of the prison will be quite out of place in heaven. The only worthy virtue is the virtue which is the fruit of love. The only security from sin is found in the ardours of a passionate resentment. We must make men hate it. How shall we light the fire? Let us turn to the Christ. "No man can serve two

masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other." Let us pause here. "Hate the one." That appears to be suggestive of what we need. We are in search of a hatred. We are told we cannot serve God and mammon. If we love the one we must hate the other, and so for the hatred of sin we must turn to the love of our Lord. We are brought back to the old fellowship. Kinship with the Christ begins in humble surrender, deepens into intimacy, and fructifies in loving dispositions. Out of the love there is born the hatred. Let a man love the virtuous, and he will loathe the vicious.

(4) *Any municipality can coerce men into charity. We need the Lord for the creation of philanthropy.* The Poor Law system may compel us into giving, but in the gift there may be nothing of the fervour of a passionate good-will. How can we get cold charity converted into radiant philanthropy? Who will bring the fire to the frozen altar? There is an old man in the Christian Scriptures who speaks in

this wise: "He loved me and gave Himself for me"; "we love, because He first loved us"; "the love of Christ constraineth me." Out of that love for the Master there spring all the beautiful ministries which seek the welfare of our fellow-men. Love for the Lord just blossoms into philanthropy. There is no other way for the making of philanthropists. It is kindled by our attachment to the Christ of God. "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God."

HOW TO KNOW GOD BETTER

TEXT: "*Increasing in the knowledge of God.*"—Col. 1: 10.

I WANT to speak to-night about growth in spiritual knowledge. How can we strengthen our grip of spiritual realities? How can we enter more penetratingly into the unsearchable riches of Christ? How can we get at life's marrow, at its pith, its real good, its God? These questions suggest the subject of our meditation. I want to recall two or three helpful counsels which indicate to us the way of larger growth in the knowledge of God.

(1) "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" Stillness is one of the conditions of knowledge. This stillness is not the opposite to noise and tumult, but the opposite of excessive and perspiring movement. We use the same variation of the figure in our colloquial speech. We advise men

to "take things a little more quietly." The counsel does not suggest the abatement of clamour, but the relaxing of intensity, the slackening of speed. "Be still," release the strain, moderate the speed, ease down a little! Surely this is a very pertinent warning for our own day. How many men and women are living at high pressure, the high pressure which is indicative of perilous strain. No man gets the best out of life whose life is on the stretch. Even the best violin needs to have its strings occasionally relaxed. Its music will fail if the strain is persistent. And life fails to reach its highest ministries if strain and stress are persistent. The principle applies to every department of our being. Physical strain is antagonistic to the highest good. Mental strain is not productive of fruitful solutions. To leave a bewildering problem, and to ease the mind by giving it temporary leisure, is often the first and best step to its ultimate unravelment.

And is there not too much strain in the

life of the spirit? There is one line in that great and beautiful hymn, "Jesus, Lover of my soul," which I always feel is somewhat of a discord, "Hangs my helpless soul on Thee!" I do not like the stretch and the strain which are suggested by the words. It reminds one of the picture with which we are all familiar, and which is found adorning the walls of so many homes. There is a wild and tempestuous sea, and a rock rising out of the deep in the shape of a cross, and clinging to the cold rock there is a figure of a woman, with agonised face and streaming hair, holding on for bare life. I do not like the picture. There is nothing to corroborate it in the New Testament Scriptures. The New Testament picture is not that of a poor weak soul clinging with half benumbed hands to a cold rock, but of a soul resting in the hands of the Christ. But I am afraid the picture is descriptive of too many lives among the followers of Christ. We want less stretch, less strain, less feverishness, more rest.

We are not called upon to be always on the rack. It is not demanded of us that our lives should abound in strain. If life is to be fruitful, and increasing in divine knowledge, it must settle down into a more steady rest. I have often paused at a word in the Book of the prophet Ezekiel, in the wonderful passage which portrays the living creatures with the mystic faces and wings: "When they stood, they let down their wings." That last clause expressed the counsel of the Psalmist. We need to let down our wings, to check our rapid movement, to "be still."

"Be still *and know*." How can God give us visions when life is hurrying at a precipitate rate? I have stood in the National Gallery and seen people gallop round the chamber and glance at twelve of Turner's pictures in the space of five minutes. Surely we might say to such trippers, "Be still, and know Turner!" Gaze quietly at one little bit of cloud, or at one branch, or at one wave of the sea, or at one ray of the drifting moon. "Be

still, and know Turner." But God has difficulty in getting us still. That is perhaps why He has sometimes employed the ministry of dreams. Men have had "visions in the night." In the daytime I have a divine visitor in the shape of some worthy thought, or noble impulse, or hallowed suggestion, but I am in such feverish haste that I do not heed it, and pass along. I do not "turn aside to see this great sight," and so I lose the heavenly vision. If I would know more of God, I must relax the strain and moderate the pace. I must "be still."

(2) "*If any man will do His will he shall know.*" That is suggestive of location and outlook. It indicates standing ground and consequent vision. I was walking the other day through a lovely wood in the North Riding of Yorkshire. My vision was bounded by the trees to the right and to the left, and the undergrowth which stretched about my feet on every side. One who knew the wood took me a few paces from the beaten track to a little

square of elevated platform, and a woodland panorama stretched before me in bewildering beauty. The native knew the standing ground whence the vision could be obtained. And here is another standing ground: "If any man will do"; and here is another panorama—"he shall know!" I am to stand in the doing, and I shall experience the knowing: I am to stand in the middle of a deed, and I shall find the vantage ground for surveying the things of God. We have too often looked for visions in the midst of arguments. Here we are counselled to look for them in the midst of obedience. Go and do an act of mercy, and in the midst of the doing look around for God, and you shall have some vision of His glory. In the life you shall find the light, for "light is sown for the righteous." Go out and try to reclaim a fellowman, and in the midst of the saving ministry look about for the Redeemer, and you shall have some vision of His glory. Plant your feet in obedience, and your eyes shall gaze upon the unfolding

glories of the mind of God. "If any man will do His will he shall know."

(3) "*He was known to them in the breaking of bread.*" When was He made known? "In the breaking of bread." Then He employed the occasion of an ordinary meal to make Himself known to them. It is a beautiful suggestion. The commonplace shall break open and reveal to us the King. If I invite Him to come into my house and share with me the common life of the common day, through the humdrum life He will make Himself known to me. If He be invited into the kitchen, then through the common ministries of the house He will give revelations of His glory. If He be invited into the office, then through all the mechanical details of the monotonous day we shall see His appearing. If He be invited into the study, then He will redeem the work from formality, and dry duty will be changed into delightful fellowship. If I invite him to share my pleasures, my very joys will be rarefied by the light of His countenance.

He is willing to make His revelations through the humble things of the ordinary day. He will make Himself known to us " in the breaking of bread."

(4) " *I count all things but loss . . . that I may know Him.*" What am I prepared to pay for my knowledge? What did Paul pay? " The loss of all things." He looks as though his discipleship had cost him home and kinship and inheritance. But nothing was allowed to count in comparison with the knowledge of Christ. Nothing else was allowed for one moment to intrude its allurements. Ease, money, fame, were counted as " dung " that he might know Christ. I do not wonder that this man had visions, and heard things which could not be put into speech! I do not wonder that his letters abound in doxologies as he contemplates the unfolding glory of his Lord! Have I an altar of sacrifice in my life? What am I prepared to offer upon it? Have I shed any blood? Have I ever tired myself out for Jesus? Have I been willing to be

misunderstood for Jesus? Have I been willing to stand alone for Jesus, and suffer apparent defeat? If my discipleship has brought me into these deserts, then I know the meaning of the gracious promise which announces that "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." If we would know the Lord, we must be "ready to be offered." The altar must be always built, and we must be prepared for sacrifice. If we know "the fellowship of His sufferings," we shall know the radiant glory of His resurrection.

THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY

TEXT: "*We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?*"—John 3: 11, 12.

How calming and how healing is the tone of authority which sounds in these words—"We know," "We have seen." That is the tone we like to recognise in our medical men. When the physician in our home moves about in apparent knowledge and masterhood, how it subdues the inclination to panic, how it allays the fears! It is the tone we like to find in our statesmen. It is the expression of spacious sympathy, the quiet confidence that breathes from the comprehensive mind. "We know," "We have seen." All the Master's teaching has this background of personal experience. It is a

beautiful exercise to carry these words, "We know," "We have seen," right through the Gospels, and let them be sounded upon every page like an affirmatory refrain, like a grand "amen." Let us attempt the exercise with one or two of the Master's teachings. "Neither did this man sin nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Is that really so? May a man's blindness be his strength? May my infirmity be the instrument of my service? Is it possible that my very encumbrances may be marshalled for the glory of God? What is my guarantee? Just this: "We know," "We have seen." "When he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." How may I be assured of the gracious evangel? What is my guarantee? Just this: "We know," "We have seen." If we wish to know the power and value of this authoritative tone, let us remove it, and then see how the speech trembles in uncertainty and timidity. "It is highly

probable that whosoever will may take the water of life freely!" Is not the hesitancy productive of chills, and is not the trembling spirit plunged into deeper dismay? "There is a strong pre-supposition that thy brother shall rise again." The very timidity of the expression would intensify our doubt. How welcome is the strong, commanding word: "We know," "We have seen."

In the reality of the Master's experience all our personal hopes and knowledge are born. My hope has birth when I hear Him say, "I know." My soul gains rest in the assurance "We have seen." If the Lord only made a grand guess, we are of all men most miserable! But He came from above. His home was in the heavenlies. He was familiar with all its resplendent estate. He shared its glory. From this abode of light He stooped to our sin-rent and sin-defiled, troubled, timid souls, and quietly said: "We know," "We have seen."

Now mark the progress of the passage. "We speak that we do know, and testify

that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness. If I tell you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?" Let us mark the connections of this passage with scrupulous care. You will not believe the earthly, how can ye believe the heavenly? The words appear to enshrine a condition. The condition of receiving the heavenly is the acceptance of the earthly? If I am indifferent to the one, I cannot apprehend the other. What is the earthly? Something as plain as a pike-staff! What is the heavenly? Truth, partially shrouded and veiled, lying back in the profound depths of the spirit. Let us look at the earthly. There are some things so clear that they cannot be missed. They dwell upon the plane of the earthly: they are clearly revealed and demonstrated in the sphere of the earthly. Their proof is consummated in the regions of the earthly. To open the eyes is to see them! Do we *believe* them? I use that cardinal word, not in the sense of "opinion" or mere mental assent,

I use it with the significance of "conviction," and a conviction is something that makes a "convict" of me, arresting me, and holding me down to its own determined way. In this binding sense do we "believe" the earthly? Let me give two or three examples.

The deepest peace is found in the noblest life. That is one of the earthlies. I have not mentioned God or heaven. I have mentioned a truth which is daily demonstrated on the purely earthly plane. It is an earthly fact. The peace of this city to-night dwells in the hearts of its noblest citizens. Do we believe that truth? Do we pay homage to it? Do we allow it to press down upon every part of our life, and shape and mould it? Or is the truth discarded, "rejected of men," and treated with contempt? "If ye believe not the earthly, how shall ye believe the heavenly?"

The loving eye has the finest vision. I proclaim this as an obtrusive fact in the sphere of the earthly. It receives con-

firmation every day. The mother has clearer eyes than the mistress. The friend has deeper insight than the foe. Love has visions where cynicism walks in the night. The art of criticism is just the art of admiration, and the truly admirable, is only discerned by the eye of love. Do we believe it? Has our assent to it become a principle, and the ruling principle of our life? "If ye believe not the earthly, how shall ye believe the heavenly?"

"*A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.*" Here again is an earthly fact lying large upon the surface of common life! It is patent to everybody whose mind is even partially awake. The measure of life is not determined by the bulk of our possessions. There are many men with £2 a week, living larger lives than men with incomes vastly multiplied. Do we believe it? Is the belief shaping our plans, our purposes, our ambitions? "If ye believe not the earthly, how shall ye believe the heavenly?"

So that the crucial question is this:

What is our attitude to the earthlies? Is it one of indifference, cynicism, denial or contempt? *Do we pay homage to fact?* Do we bow to what we know? Or are we attempting to peer into the distant while we are disloyal to that which is near? Christ declares that reverent obeisance to things revealed is the only way to the apprehension of things that are yet unrevealed. Homage to the earthly is the condition of recognising the heavenly. The Lord will not permit us to have any fruit in the prying curiosity among the heavenlies while we despise and trample upon the things that stand revealed at our very feet. He has glories upon glories to make known unto us! He will lead us into the love and purpose of the divine fatherhood, into the glories of redemption, into the marvellous ministries of the Holy Spirit, into the all-subduing outlook upon the immortal life. But we must begin by reverencing that which we know. The genuineness of our appetite will be judged by our attitude to the bread already given.

What then do you know? Do you know this: Love is the greatest thing in the world? Kneel down before the truth, and pay it reverent homage. Do you know this: Purity is sight? Bow down before it, and let it govern the common day. Do you know this: Truth is the dynamic of progress? Bend your will to it, and let it find expression in the ordinary affairs of the daily life. Go down on your knees to the earthly He has revealed, and in the midst of your reverence and obedience, the good Lord will hear your cry for light. "Light is sown for the righteous." Obeying the earthly, He will lead you into the heavenly. He will take you into the house of interpretation, and He will unveil to you some of the "things" which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

"IN CHRIST JESUS"

TEXT: "*In Christ Jesus.*"—Romans 8: 1.

"IN CHRIST JESUS!" That is the centre of rest. The phrase leads us at once into the mystical heart of the Christian religion. Do I chill and repel your approaches by the use of the word mystical? Is that one of your perplexities with the Christian religion, that its forces are so mystical, so remote from the hard rough-and-tumble roads of practical life? But where have we got that antithesis of the mystical and the practical? Where can we find the justification for the divorce which places the mystical in dreamy castles in the air, and the practical in houses of bricks and mortar, reared upon the common earth? Is there any inevitable incongruity between them? What is the interpretation offered by the dictionary? Let us see what suggestion is given by the latest and most scholarly of these guides. Mystical—"hidden from or

obscure to human knowledge; mysterious; obscure; expressing a sense comprehensible only to a higher grade of intelligence, or to those especially initiated." And what is the significance of the practical? Practical—"pertaining to action, practice, or use." I discern no antagonism between the two. I think they may be found in the most happy and intimate wedlock. There are forces, recognised only by their possessors, and even to them obscure and mysterious, which are, nevertheless, most powerful ministries in the domain of action and practice. What say you of love? Is it mystical? It is known only to the initiated. Love is known only to the lover, and even to him it is unknown. It is unknown, yet well known. It is most mystical. Is it practical? "Love beareth all things." It is "the greatest thing in the world." All the most practical and palpable forces in common life are steeped in the mystical. The more refined the force, the more dim and undefinable its kingdom. Coarseness is comparatively compassable, but when we

rise into the higher graces and refinements of the spirit, the measuring rod must be left behind. There is many a practical river which has its birth-place in the misty and inaccessible heights.

When, therefore, I use the word "mystical," I do not exclude the content of the practical. And here is a mystical relationship, fraught with every kind and quality of beneficent, practical issue—"them that are in Christ Jesus." What is the principle enshrined in the phrase? The principle is this. One personality is rooted and embedded in another personality, and receives from it an effluence which determines the trend and colour of its life. One is *in* the other. Well, is that principle altogether in the clouds? I find examples of its application on every side. Wherever I turn I find illustrative instances; teacher and scholars, master and disciples, fountains and rivers, one personality inserted into the personality of another, and receiving the determining gifts of thought and inspiration. If I turn to the sphere of

politics, I find fountains and rivers, vines and branches. I find what is called "the Manchester School," a body of politicians whose political life is primarily rooted in the personality of Richard Cobden, from whom they derive the colour of their thought, the spirit of their policy, and the character of their ideal. "They that are in Richard Cobden." If I turn to literature, I find societies of men and women gathered in loving fellowship round about the personality of individual men. Here is a Ruskin Society! Ruskin is known among them as "the master." The disciples seek to acquire the master's thought, to perpetuate the master's spirit, to incarnate the master's ideal, to give it embodiment in schemes of practical enterprise. "They that are in John Ruskin." It is not otherwise if I turn to the regions of art; I find whole schools of men inhaling the breath of artistic life from the thought and spirit of another. I find the principle operating even in spheres ecclesiastical. "Puseyite!" That sounds indicative of

master and disciple, of fountain and river. Wesleyan! That is suggestive of an ecclesiastical root with multitudinous branches. "They that are in John Wesley." All these are illustrative of a predominant principle that one man's life becomes the fountain of other men's rivers. In Cobden! In Ruskin! In Turner! In Wesley! "*In Christ!*" I feel the utter unworthiness and inadequacy of the illustrations. I only offer them as hints, suggestions, sign-posts, and even a rough and crumbling sign-post may point the way to the golden city.

Well, now, if we are not altogether strangers to the principle in common life, let us see what are the implications of the supreme fellowship expressed in the words of my text. "In Christ Jesus." On man's side, what are the elements in the gracious union? What does it involve? How can any personality be rooted and embedded in the personality of the Christ? How can a man become "in Christ"? First of all *it implies the choice of Christ.* A man must

choose his centre. He must make up his mind as to what shall be the centre round which his life shall revolve. He must determine his leader, to whom he will pay reverence and obeisance. Now that is an intellectual choice, and Christianity always appeals to the intelligence. It puts no premium on blindness. It offers no reward to those whose eyes are closed in guilty sleep. From end to end of the Christian Scriptures the clarion is sounding to awake. "Awake, awake, my soul." "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Jerusalem!" "Awake, thou that sleepest!" "Now it is high time to awake!" That is the note of the Christian religion. It calls for wakefulness, for mental alertness, for the exercise of a bright and vigorous intelligence. "What *think* ye?" says the Master. Put your intelligence to work that your choices may be sound. Don't go on blindly! "What think ye?" Is it a challenge to the intellect? Look about. Exercise thy powers of observation. Investigate the alternatives that present themselves. In-

spect the creations of mammon. Look closely at the works and workmanship of Christ. "What think ye?" Make up your minds. Choose your centre. Register your choice.

But to be "in Christ" means more than the choice of a centre; it implies *the surrender of the will.* My brethren, it is no use our seeking to evade this supreme demand. The treasuries of the Christian religion cannot be entered through the ministry of merely intellectual exercises. If we do not surrender the will, we can never even faintly appreciate the spirit and genius of the Christian religion. Mental activity will bring a man up to the gate; he can only enter by moral sacrifice. Not through the weighing and assaying of grammatical usages, not by a penetrating exegesis, are we going to pass into the fellowship of Christ, but by the all-discovering ministry of a surrendered life. I know that this is familiar to everybody; why then do we not do it? I will give you the answer in the words of the noblest gentle-

man it has been my honour to know, a man whose personality was refined into such hallowed beauty and chasteness that all his judgments are attended with peculiar significance and weight. Henry Drummond once said: "What do I think keeps men from becoming Christians? Some special sin which they prefer to Christ. I think some *one* definite sin. In every life, I believe, there is some one particular sin, outstanding only to oneself, different in different cases, but always *one* with which the secret history is woven through and through. This is that which the unconverted man will not give up for Christ." I will leave the quotation with this one remark, that a man must be prepared to surrender that one thing before he can come into fruitful fellowship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Having chosen his centre of rest, having made a sacrifice of his will, let the man now abide in *the attitude of rest.* Let the mind rest in the Master's thought. Let the conscience rest in the Master's commandment.

Let the heart rest in the Master's promises. Don't get away from His thought, His commandment, His promise! " Abide in Him!" Make your home there. Don't stray hither and thither in worldly flirtation. " Rest in the Lord!" In such ceaseless abiding you will know the inexpressible experience of being " in Christ." " All my springs are in Thee."

"APT TO TEACH"

TEXT: "*Apt to Teach.*"—2 Timothy 2: 24.

"APT TO TEACH." How exquisitely this sentence is placed! On the one hand there is the grace of "gentleness." On the other hand there is the grace of "patience." It is an aptitude resting in the embrace of two lovely dispositions. Or, if I may change the figure, it is a strong and graceful flower fed by two conspicuous roots. Where do the roots gather their provision? The aptitude to teach rises out of the twin dispositions of gentleness and patience: where do these obtain their resources? We must search down through the many layers of the chapter to its beginning, and we shall find the object of our search in the suggestive words,—"Strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." That is the primal resource. From that we rise through the ministries of divine fellowship, and hallowed remem-

brance, and consecrated toil, up to the Christian dispositions of gentleness and patience, and to the crowning aptitude of being empowered to communicate one's experience to others. Such is the setting of the clause. Now let us give this particular aptitude a little more detailed inspection, and mark the conditions of its spiritual attainment. "The servant of the Lord must be . . . apt to teach." What are the implications of this aptitude.

I. THE TEACHER MUST HAVE A MESSAGE.

Have I got anything worth telling? Do I regard anything I have to say as of infinite moment? Is it a matter of life and death to anybody? Is it worth anybody's while coming across the street to listen? Have I got a clear evangel, and if so, what do I consider the very marrow of the message? I want to force the teachers to face these most searching and revealing questions. What are our "good tidings"? Suppose we were face to face with a crowd of children who

had to learn all that they would know about the unseen from our lips, and suppose that we were permitted only one short lesson in which to make the revelation, what would be the burden of our speech? Are we clear about this? Are we careless, slovenly, sleepy trumpeters, or do we sound clear, definite, resounding notes? Surely our message would all gather round about the Christ, and surely the emphasis of the message would be found in the proclamation of truths like these:—Jesus loves; Jesus saves; Jesus keeps. *Jesus loves!* It is an exquisite experience to watch the face of a little child when even the rudimentary elements of this glorious truth break upon his mind and heart. It is one of the sweetest moments in life to tell that story into the ears of a little child who listens to it for the first time. *Jesus saves!* He saves from sin, from moral infirmity; from spiritual stagnation; from spiritual death. *Jesus keeps!* He not only keeps us as we protect the candle flame from the rude wind that

would blow it out; He keeps us as we protect a flower, nourishing and cherishing it unto unfoldings of ever-deepening beauty, and maturing it into the stage of ultimate perfection. The teacher whose teaching is to be eternally fruitful must have a message that never loses communion with these all-vital beginnings.

II. THE TEACHER MUST HAVE AN EXPERIENCE.

What do I know about my message? Can I defend and confirm it by illustrations from my own life? How do I present the truth? There are at least four ways in which I may present it, and they mark a gradation of deepening impressiveness and effectiveness. I can present truth as an abstraction. I can present it embodied in a parable, a story, or a fairy tale. I can present it enshrined in a work of art. I can present it incarnated in a life. Experiment with these four methods upon a company of little children. The first method will leave them listless

and indifferent. The second method will awake their interest, and their minds will be all alert. The third method will intensify their inquisitiveness, and awake their wonder. The fourth method, the presentation of a living man in whom the truth is incarnate, say the grace of courage, will make their souls bend in reverence, and in appropriating homage and love.

Do I as a teacher incarnate my message? Have I lived it? Can I say to the children: "Come hither, and I will declare what the Lord hath done for *my* soul." It is the personal element in the teachings of the Apostle Paul that makes his teaching so overwhelmingly forceful. Even in the most argumentative and controversial epistle the personal experience is obtruded in defence and confirmation of the truth. He has a mighty sense of redemption, and he has an equally profound sense of the all-prevailing presence and tenderness of God. It is no wonder that there emerges from this man's life such a confident "I know!" That is the tone

of the real teacher. Can I speak with such assurance? Have I any experience to corroborate my evangel? What can I tell the scholars about the forgiveness of sins? What do I know about it? What can I tell them about the surrender of the will, of the holy fellowship of prayer, and the power of the Spirit as He operates in the strong control of the life. What can I tell them about "the joy of the Lord," and the "peace that passeth understanding?" Anyone who is to be "apt to teach" must have a life which illustrates his own message.

III. THE TEACHER MUST HAVE A MISSION.

What is this mission? When I go to my class, what is my aim? Is my purpose as clear as a bell? The common reply would be: "My purpose is to bring the scholars to Jesus, to incline them to give their hearts to Him." But have we a clear conception of the meaning of these words, or is our purpose lost in apparent vagueness? I listened to a Christian

worker who had been taking part in a certain service for children, and he exultantly expressed himself in this way: "We had a grand time, the children were crying all over the room." That may not be an issue of which to make much boast. I am not quite sure that we need make little children cry. I want them to fall in love with Christ, and to fall in love is to leap into joy, and laughter will be a finer expression than tears. We want some clear thinking about this matter of bringing children to Christ. I would that all our teachers had some elementary system of psychology. We need to know something about the constituents of the inner life, and especially about the workings of the will. The laying down of the will is the secret of Christian discipleship, and will inevitably issue in eternal glory.

For the adequate discharge of this mission the teacher needs three things. He needs *thought*. For effective teaching we require hard, honest thinking. Teachers never had more helps than they have to-

day. Can we add to this that they were never more thoughtful? I am sometimes afraid that the multitudinous helps are crushing the individuality out of our teachers, that we are losing the worth of their original endowment. Our teachers ought to be as distinct in their individualities as the violin, trumpet, and harp. Let our teachers use their helps as material for thought, and not as substitutes for it. Then the teacher needs *force*. All the current of the life must set in one direction. Teaching, like preaching, should be not only a work, but a hobby; not only a sacrifice, but a delight. If there be no joy in the teaching, the speech will be forceless, and forceless speech is of all things most impotent. In the life of the successful teacher all the little tributaries of his days are made to converge in his one supreme and central purpose. Then, finally, the teacher needs *persuasiveness*. For an interpretation of this word we can go back to the lovely dispositions which surround my text, the

twin graces of gentleness and patience. These two words, "gentle" and "patience," almost describe the characteristics of an angler. How patient is the angler in studying the river and the fish, and how exquisitely gentle is his throw! Both elements are needed in the constitution of the ideal teacher. He must be gentle, genial, wooing; and he must be patient, holding out through long seasons, and never yielding to despair.

LOVING THE ENEMY

TEXT: "*Love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the most High.*"—Luke 6: 35.

"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES."

THIS searching counsel describes a certain pose or posture of the soul. The exposure of a greenhouse is vital and determinative of the quantity and quality of the flowers and fruits. It is even so with the attitude of the soul. Its finished issues are determined by its pose. Dispositions are just the poses of the soul. A soul in the attitude of prejudice is disinclined to the light. A soul in the attitude of jealousy presents a front of unkindly suspicion. A soul in the attitude of hatred bristles with perpetual antagonisms. Love is likewise an attitude of the soul, and is significant of a certain prominent temper in the life.

Love is the attitude of wooing. Love seeks to convert the hostile forces into a friendly power. Love is a seeker, that it

may be a winner. Its aim is to transform the unfriendly sword into a friendly ploughshare. It therefore seeks the conversion of force. Love is that temper of the soul which seeks to change alienation into intimate fellowship. This pose or temper of the soul can only be acquired in the atmosphere of prayer. It is in the ministry of prayer that the crooked become straight. If we entertain feelings of perilous hatred against another, let us force ourselves into the presence of God, and in that all-corrective Presence the foul inclination will be changed, and the posture of the soul will be transformed into the forgiving attitude of God. Love your enemies.

Love is the instrument of knowing. We can have no real knowledge of our enemy if we are destitute of love. Love is the posture in which vision becomes possible. It is through love that we have discernment and knowledge. If a man say, "I know my brother," and he loves him not, his knowledge is only pretence. To see anybody aright we require a disposition of love.

Love reflects the disposition of God. If I may say it reverently, to love an enemy is the very pose of our God. "While we were yet sinners Christ died." "When we were enemies we were reconciled." God is well disposed towards us and all men. "I know the thoughts that I have towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." To let the mind dwell upon the disposition of God is to unconsciously acquire His pose. It always helps us to be well disposed towards anybody when somebody whom we love is well disposed towards them. The attitude of the one we love imperceptibly fashions our own. Because God loves His enemies, we shall find it possible to love ours. "We love because He first loved us."

"AND DO THEM GOOD."

The posture of love will inevitably issue in the doing of good. Let me put three words together, which, in their order, suggest a sequence of actual life. Benevolence, Benediction, Benefaction! Bene-

volence is the pose of love. To be benevolent is to be well-disposed, to be *will*-disposed. To be benevolent is to have the kindly inclination to woo and to win even our fiercest foe. Benevolence will issue in benediction. Benediction is benevolence expressed in speech. Our diction will be ordered and chastened by our benevolence. Unkindly criticism will be checked. Contempt will be changed into eulogy. The art of fault-finding, will be changed into the ministry of grace-finding. Malediction becomes benediction. Benevolence will also express itself in benefaction. Benefaction is benevolence expressed in service. It is love testifying to itself in gracious service. In what kind of benefactions does love express itself? I cannot tell you. Love will discover its own ministry. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." Love will discover what the enemy's hungers are. Love will interpret and supply the enemy's lacks and gaps. It may not be the hunger for bread. It may be the hunger for comfort and cheer.

Whatever the hunger may be, "God shall reveal that unto you." "Do them good." Kill the enemy by unfailing kindness.

"AND LEND, NEVER DESPAIRING."

"And lend." I cannot limit the interpretation of this word to the mere content of money. Love is self-impartation, and with self we give all things. Lend to the enemy! Let our your substance, your possessions: make use of everything that you may woo and win him. Be liberal in thought, in sympathy, in labours, in prayer. Bleed freely, that by the power of the sacrifice he may be allured into communion. "*Lend, never despairing.*" Never say, "I have prayed so long for the enemy, and he is as unfriendly as ever. I shall attempt the insuperable task no more." That is the very opposite to the course of much-enduring love. There are some phrases which love never uses, and I think they ought never to pass over Christian lips. Here are one or two:—"A hopeless case"; "Too far gone"; "A bad job." The

despair which is expressed in these phrases ought never to find entrance into the hearts of the disciples of Christ. We never know just how near we are to victory. The chairman of one of our great mining companies was telling us a little while ago how very near they were to overlooking the wealth of a great estate. They had been working for a long period, and the labour appeared to be absolutely fruitless, and one day, when the purpose to cease work was almost ripe, and the settlement was to be left as quite a hopeless sphere, the manager was at the facings, speaking to one of the workmen, and idly playing with the facing with his walking-stick, when a small quantity of the soil tumbled down, and lo! the long-sought-for vein was discovered. They were purposing relinquishing the labour when the gold was only a hand's breadth away. This is even so in the searching for souls. When the work appears hopeless, we may be within an inch of victory. One more try, and we may be at the gold. "Lend, never despairing."

"AND YOUR REWARD SHALL BE GREAT."

To some extent love enshrines its own reward. Even when love is wounded, we would not lose our love to escape the pain. If a mother have daily agony because of her wayward son, if the love she bears him brings her constant sorrow she would not be willing to lose her love that she might escape the grief. No mother would have the nerve of love deadened in order that her sensitiveness might be benumbed. No, there is something in love itself which has its own reward. But, beyond this, to love an enemy brings to man the reward of fellowship with God. "Everyone that loveth . . . knoweth God." We "walk together" because we are "agreed." And beyond all this, to love the enemy brings to the lover a spiritual transformation. "Ye shall be sons of the most High." Our character is to be elevated and sublimed. Our sonship is to be worthy of the father. The child is to be glorified. We are to "awake in His likeness."

MY SHIELD AND MY GLORY

TEXT: "*But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. . . . I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.*"—Psalm 3: 3, 5.

THAT is a sweet and heartening song, and the song is all the sweeter when we note the estate of the songster. Some circumstances set the sweetness of music in pronounced relief. The thrush pouring out its varied note amid the sweet, fresh leafage of the luxuriant spring, does not arrest us like the robin warbling its cheery note from leafless trees in the depths of a winter's day. The music of village bells is never more fascinating than when it sounds through the interludes in a night of storm. I stood in delight as I listened to a choir on the summit of the Rigi singing "All things praise Thee, Lord most high"; but delight passed into still wonder when, outside a dreary little cottage in a dull and dingy

street, I heard the strain, "My God, I thank Thee who hath made the earth so bright!" It is the song that rises out of dreariness that exercises such a fascinating ministry. "*At midnight* Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them." And here is the singer of this Psalm, not dwelling in luxurious ease, in the inspiring warmth of a glorious summer; with him it is winter-time, and it is night; yet out of the winter and the night, there rises the jubilant strain of this triumphant trust in God.

Let us look at the "outside" of his life. "How are they increased that trouble me!" His external comfort was disturbed. "Many are they that rise up against me." His legitimate progress was checked. "Many there be that say of my soul, there is no help for him in God." His piety was questioned, and his fellowship with the Divine was denied. Now, put all these together. Here is a man surrounded by multiplied annoyances, encountering barriers that are everywhere reared to prevent him

grasping his legitimate rights, his piety denounced as impiety, and his spiritual companionship proclaimed as a pretence! He is denied the need of physical comfort, the taste of worldly success, and the luxury of human regard. Man fails him! How then? He retired more entirely upon God. In God he found that which transcended comfort, he found peace; in God he found that which transcended success, he found glory. In God he found that which transcended human regard, he found the approbation of the Divine.

"THOU, O LORD, ART A SHIELD FOR ME."

It is a beautiful figure this figure of the shield! It suggests the all-sufficient protection which comes from the companionship of God. The Lord will be to him a shield against the foe without. The Lord will not permit my external circumstances to injure my spirit. The world will not be permitted to pass beyond its threats. The hostility of my surroundings shall not hinder my spiritual growth. My gardener

said to me two or three weeks ago: "I have got some shoots in the frame, we must have them covered up before the winter comes." And now the gardener has supplied the shield, and the tender shoots are growing in spite of the unfriendly air without. And there are young shoots in the life, the tender growths of faith, and hope, and love. And in my external life there is often a winter of failure and adversity, and human malice and contempt. The Lord will defend the young shoots. He will be "a shield for me." But the Lord will also be a shield against the foe within. When the circumstances are unfriendly, man is apt to become embittered. The hostility may nourish revenge. Failure may make a cynic. The winter time may breed envy, malice and uncharitableness. I need some defence against these foes within. "Man needs re-enforcing against his worse self." This re-enforcement I obtain from my God. But then I claim all real protections as the ministry of the King. Anything which shelters me from

the enemy is the armour of God. "The shields of the earth belong to God" (Ps. xlvii. 9). We claim them all. If good literature is a fine protection against vice, we claim it as one of the Lord's shields. And so with art and music, and all recreation and pleasure which ward off the approaches of the devil. They are King's shields, the gift of His grace for the protection of His children.

"THOU, O LORD, ART MY GLORY."

In the approbation of God, I find my honour. The light of God's countenance eclipses all the dazzling tinsel of worldly fame. The crown that man can give me, man can take away. I hold my human glory at the bidding of human caprice. There are no crowns like God's crowns, and His crowns are worn, not as external dignities, but as spiritual dignities which adorn the soul. He gives to me "the Crown of Life." Every faculty in my being shines in the abundance of life. No power is dull and dead. Everything is bright

and living, glorious with the crown of life. "Thou, O Lord, art my glory."

"THOU, O LORD, ART THE LIFTER UP OF MINE HEAD."

The failures of men, the many obstacles they have to encounter, and especially the malice and contempt of their fellows, might humiliate them, and cause them to hang their heads in confusion of face. The man whose external life passes from defeat to defeat, and who never sits down at the festival of success, is apt to acquire the attitude of severe depression. "But Thou, O Lord, art the lifter up of mine head." The Lord's companionship is my pride and my boast. The sublimity of man's surroundings often gives a loftiness to his bearing. A man who companions much with kings may unconsciously gain the kingly carriage. How, then, must it be with men who companion with the Almighty, and who find in Him their shield and their glory? It is a simple fact, that the intimate companions of the Lord are

characterised by a certain stately dignity, which is never so manifest as when they are in the minority, and are compelled to stand alone. God is "the lifter up of their head." Is it any wonder that these wealthy conceptions of God should be accompanied by the inspiration of glad and ceaseless communion? Men were unfriendly; circumstances were unsympathetic; this man "cried unto the Lord, and He heard him." There was a constant festival of fellowship, a fruitful responsiveness between man and his God.

"*I laid me down and slept; I waked; for the Lord sustained me.*"

Contrast the calmness of these words with the tumult of the opening of the Psalm. The Psalmist is proclaiming the secret of peace.

There is no peace like the peace of the man who loves to lie down at night with the thought of God possessing his mind and heart. Happy the man who delights to recall the thought of God before he sinks into slumber!

"Be my last thought how sweet to rest
For ever on my Saviour's breast."

There is no peace like the peace of a man who, when he awakes in the morning, gives first welcome to the thought of God.

"Fairer than the morning, lovelier than the daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with thee."

The man who finds in God his shield, who seeks in Him his glory, and who makes in Him his boast, will have mornings of joy, and evening times of light.

FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM

TEXT: Psalm 32: 1-5.

MARTIN LUTHER was once asked which were his favourite Psalms. He replied, "The Pauline Psalms." On being asked to state more particularly to which he referred, he mentioned the 32nd, 51st, 130th, and the 143rd. It is not difficult for anyone who knows the Apostle's thought to discover phrases in these Psalms which might fittingly be placed in the Epistle to the Romans. "According to Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." "With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him there is plenteous redemption." "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no flesh living be justified." All these phrases are characterised by Pauline intensity, and they have the peculiar flavour of the Apostle's thought and inspiration. But perhaps no Psalm is more

Pauline than the Psalm whose early passages I wish to attempt to expound. Augustine used to read the Psalm with weeping heart, and before his death he had it written on the wall over his sick-bed, "that he might exercise himself therein, and find comfort therein in his sickness."

What is the evangel of the Psalm? It proclaims the blessedness of forgiveness. Here is a man burdened with the vivid consciousness of personal sin. His sin is to him no vague, disturbing presence, filling him with undefined unrest. His sin stands out before him, bold and clearly characterised. Mark the wealth of the vocabulary which he employs to describe it. He uses three words, and each word reveals a different aspect of his comprehensive conception. He calls it his "transgression." The word is significant of a "breaking-loose." The figure is almost that of a horse that has broken the traces, and is bolting. The cords have been snapped. The yoke has been thrown aside. The man conceives himself as in revolt. He is a rebel, a deserter. He has

broken the bands; he has discarded all discipline, and has roamed in ways of unconsidered licence. He also calls it his "sin." He has deflected from the prescribed line of life. He has chosen his own end. He has missed the mark. His life "has not arrived." It is characterised by failure. He also calls it his "iniquity." His life is marred by crookedness and deformity. Guilt has sunk into his faculties, and all of them have been twisted in a certain perversity. Such is the man's vivid consciousness of his own estate. He is a rebel of perverse inclinations, and wrenched by self-will into spiritual deformity.

Now, concerning this burning consciousness of personal sin, we are told the man "kept silence." He permitted no one to share his knowledge. He took no one into his confidence. He invited no fellowship, either on the part of man or of God. He shut the fire up in his own life, and "kept silence." How did such secret, silent burden affect the man's life? "When I kept silence my bones

waxed old through my roaring all the day long." The burden registered its presence in a wearied body. The secret moan resulted in aching bones. There is a wonderful intimacy between the flesh and the spirit. To sap the forces of the one drains the energy of the other. We see a man looking haggard and worn, and we say, "That man has got something on his mind." The burden in the consciousness reveals itself in the weakness and pallor of the flesh. This man, with the secret, unspoken consciousness of sin, dragged along a wearied body. He was continually tired. But he was not only burdened by physical weariness, he was also a victim of mental depression. "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me." He moved in a condition of constant depression. He felt as if he was weighed down. There was no lightness about his thought, no buoyancy, no soaring power. He could not get away from the burden "day nor night." He felt that "the hand of the Lord" was weighing upon him! That is a pathetic word. "The hand

of the Lord" is usually a minister of succour, of lifting, of resurrection! But here the "hand of the Lord" is regarded as the minister of depression, and the man is held down in mental flatness and imprisonment. But the issues of unconfessed sin are not exhausted in effects upon the body and the mind. "My moisture is turned into drought of summer." He was the victim of a dry, fierce heat! No cool, cooling influences breathed through his soul. He was "heated hot with burning fears." He was possessed by spiritual feverishness. He was disquieted and filled with unrest. He was touchy and irritable with morbid sensitiveness, a sensitiveness that converted trifles into ministers of crucifixion. Such is the oppressive and all-consuming burden of secret and unacknowledged sin.

And now this weary, burdened, feverish soul turns his eyes toward the face of God. He is inclined to open his life to the Father. He "takes it to the Lord in prayer." He will tell God all about it. How ample and all-conclusive is the

telling! The Psalmist had a three-fold description of sin, now he has a three-fold description of its confession. "I acknowledged my sin." "Mine iniquity have I not hid." "I confessed my transgressions." The marrow of all these pregnant phrases is that the Psalmist made a clean breast of it. He hid nothing from the Lord. There was no unclean thing concealed within his tent. He opened out every secret room. He gave God all the keys. Everything was brought out and penitently acknowledged. He confessed in particulars, and not in generals. He "poured out his heart before God." He emptied it as though he was emptying a vessel in which no single unclean drop was allowed to remain. His confession was made in perfect frankness and sincerity. "In his spirit there was no guile." There was nothing tricky or underhand in the acknowledgment. Everything was opened, and tearfully revealed.

What was the outcome of the confession? The Psalmist has given us a three-fold

word for his burden. He has given us a three-fold word for his confession. Now he gives us a three-fold word to describe the Lord's response. His transgression was *forgiven.* It was lifted and carried away out of sight. The poor, burdened, wearied deserter brought his heavy load to the Lord, and it was lifted clean away. "He bare the sin of many." Oh, the sense of relief when we have been carrying a heavy load upon our shoulders, and at length it is lifted away! How we stretch ourselves in welcome freedom! How infinitely more so when the burden is lifted from the heart! "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But the Psalmist uses a second word to describe his emancipation. His sin was *covered.* I am familiar with that scriptural figure. It meets us again and again in the Word of God. "Thou coverest it with the deep." That is the kind of covering accomplished by our God. He puts an ocean over our sin! "Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound." Grace rolls over

like an immeasurable flood, and our sins are submerged beneath its mighty depths. Our sin is covered. We who have seen the Master know how that gracious covering has become ours. It is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord. "He is our righteousness." "He shall cover thee with the robe of righteousness." A third word the Psalmist uses to describe his deliverance: "The Lord *imputeth not* iniquity." Forgiven sins are never to be counted; they will not enter into the reckoning. They will not influence the Lord's regard for us. In His love for us, forgiven sins are as though they had never been. Here, then, is the completeness of the freedom of the children of God. Sin forgiven! Sin covered! Sin no longer reckoned! It is not wonderful that this once tried, depressed, feverish soul, tasting now the delights of a gracious freedom, should cry out, "Blessed is the man!" "The winter is passed, and the time of the singing of birds is come."

PERILOUS COMPROMISE

TEXT: "*Be not righteous overmuch.*"—Ecclesiastes 7 : 16.

THAT is most soothing and comforting counsel for the indolent soul. The unredeemed man instinctively shrinks from the pure and shining ideal. He recoils from standards that are too exacting. He prefers an easier servitude, a loose-jacket kind of restraint. How few of us like to hear the trumpet-call which bids us "stand upon the mount before the Lord!" We like to "measure ourselves by ourselves." So the counsel of the text is by no means unpalatable and unwelcome. "Be not righteous overmuch." What an easy yoke! How mild the requirements! How delightfully lax the discipline? Why, the school is just a playground!

Have we any analogous counsel in our own day? In what modern guise does it appear? Here is a familiar phrase:—

"We can have too much of a good thing." To appreciate honey we must not live on it. We must have a varied diet. "Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee lest thou be filled therewith." Restraint is part of the ministry of appreciation. We can sicken the appetite and make it loathe the thing it loved. "We can have too much of a good thing." Such is the general application of the proverb. But the word is stretched out to include the sphere of religion. The counsel runs somewhat in this wise; we require a little religion if we would drink the nectar of the world, and we require a little worldliness if we would really appreciate the flavour of religion. To put the counsel baldly, we need a little devilry to make life spicy. That is one modern shape of the old counsel.

Here is the old counsel in another dress:—"We must wink at many things." We must not be too exactingly scrupulous. If we would be comfortable, we must acquire the habit of winking at many

things as we walk along the changing way. We must cultivate the art of closing the eye at the needful place. That is the way to march through life easily, attended by welcome comforts. Don't be too particular; "Be not righteous overmuch."

Here is a third dress in which the old counsel appears in modern times:— "In Rome, one must do as Rome does." Our company must determine our moral attire. We must have the adaptability of a chameleon. If we are abstainers, don't let us take our scrupulosity into festive and convivial gatherings. Don't let us throw wet blankets over the genial crowd. If some particular expedient, some rather shaky policy be prevalent in your own line of business, do not stand out an irritating exception. "In Rome do as Rome does." If you are in company where the venerable is treated with laughter, join in the derision. Do not startle your fellowmen by eccentric conduct. Do not chill the riotous conversation by any freezing silence. "Be not righteous overmuch."

Now let us pass from the Book of Ecclesiastes to another part of the sacred Word, and listen to a voice from a higher sphere. What says Ecclesiastes? "Be not righteous overmuch." What says the Prophet Isaiah? "Your wine is mixed with water." The prophet is proclaiming the angry condemnatory word of the Eternal God. "Your wine is mixed with water." The people had been carrying out the counsel of Koheleth. They had been diluting their righteousness. They had been putting a little water into their wine. The prophet proclaims that God will not accept any dilutions. He will not accept a religion that is watered down. He despises a devotion which has been thinned into compromise. Wine represents blood. Blood represents sacrifice. To water the wine is to thin the sacrifice, and to impoverish it. It is to make the surrender imperfect. It is to give with one hand and to withhold with the other. It is a religion without strong piquant taste and flavour. It is

a piety whose movement is almost imperceptible. "Your wine is mixed with water," and the Almighty God despises the impious concoction.

In many parts of the Old Testament this perilous compromise is condemned. "They have given their tears to the altar, and have married the daughter of a strange god." "They feared the Lord and served their own gods." This is the type of broken fellowship and of impaired devotion against which the prophets of the Old Testament direct their severest indictments.

Let us pass on now to the day when the light is come, and the "glory of the Lord" is risen upon us. Let us hear the counsel and command of "the Word made flesh." "Be ye perfect"; that is the injunction of the Master. We are to carry the refining and perfecting influences of religion into everything. Everywhere it is to be pervasive of life, as the blood is pervasive of the flesh. This is the doctrine of entire sanctification. Our piety is to be ubiquitous. We are to sanctify the

scruple. Just as we can magnetise the point of a needle, and endow it with powers of mystic allurement, so the trifling things of life—the needle-points—are to be converted into mystic magnets filled with the power of the Holy Ghost. Everything in our life is to constitute an allurement to help to draw the world to the feet of the risen Lord. This all-pervasive religion, this non-compromising religion is the only one that discovers the thousand secret sweets that are yielded by the Hill of Zion. It is the only religion that presses the juice out of the grapes of life, and drinks the precious essences which God hath prepared for them that love Him. Let there be no mistake about this. Religious compromise never gets beyond the husks. It is the man of entire sanctification who draws into his life the infinitely varied treasures of the crowded way. Life to him is no lottery; there are no empty packets. Every experience deposits its wealth. For him "to live is Christ!" "Be not righteous overmuch"; that

counsel never leads a man to the Springs. "Be ye perfect"; that is the counsel which, though it entail ceaseless labour, converts life into a continual song. "Be ye perfect"; sanctify the entire round, never be off duty, and life will become an apocalypse of ever-heightening and ever-brightening glory.

TO KNOW JESUS!

TEXT: "*This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.*"—John 17 : 3.

"THIS is life eternal" . . . to know Jesus. Do I know Jesus? Then I have eternal life. How tremendously profound must be the significance of this word "*know*"! What rich and vital content it must possess! We often profess to have knowledge which yet has no perceptible influence upon life. Our supposed knowledge of men has often no appreciable effect even in shaping our conduct, not to name the deeper result of determining our character. But here, in my text, knowledge implies life: nay, it is life! "This is life eternal, to know Jesus." You cannot have one without the other. This knowledge is not a separate or separable quantity, which at our pleasure we can isolate, and consider apart from life. Here, at any rate, knowing is inseparable from

living, living is inseparable from knowing. To know Jesus is to live Jesus. "This is life"; to know is to live.

Let us note, then, that in the Christian Scriptures the word "know" has a far deeper significance than it receives in common life. In human relationships an introduction to another person appears to entitle us to claim that we know him. A nodding acquaintance in the street appears to establish a similar claim. "Do you know So-and-so?" "Yes; I met him at a friend's house for a few minutes a year ago." This kind of knowledge has little or no significance. It has no content. It is a mere superficies, a thing without depth. It is not implicated with anything vital. We might lose it, and its absence would in no wise impair the volume or quality of our personal life. Such knowledge and such life are in separate compartments, and have no more relationship than exists between the first and third class passengers in an ordinary train. Anyone who approaches the New Testament must

leave that conception of knowledge far behind if he would enter into the interpretation of the truths and means of grace. For the peril abounds that men and women do take the shallow speech of the world, with all its impoverished content, and use it as their measure for the profound and sublime speech of the Bible. I sometimes wince at the almost careless way in which the question is frequently asked, "Do you know Jesus?"—and at the almost flippant affirmative in which it is frequently answered. It is too frequently the speech of the street, the recognition of the common nod, which is suggested, and not the vital far-reaching speech of the Son of God. Let us use a great word greatly, and settle with ourselves that this word "know" is marvellously deep, and that no man has ever touched the bottom.

"To know Jesus"—what does it mean? Here is a guiding word from the Apostle John: "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar." Then how many of us know Him? "He

that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not . . ." Then knowledge implies obedience. There can be no knowledge of Christ without obedience. Without obedience we may have a few ideas about Him, but we do not know Him. If we are destitute of obedience, then that which we assume to be knowledge is no knowledge at all, and we must give it another name. Obedience is essential. What is obedience? Confining our inquiry strictly to the human plane, what is essentially implied in obedience? When one man obeys another it is implied that he subjects his will to the will of the other, and works in harmony with its demands. The oarsmen in our University boats have to subject their wills to the will of the strokesman, whose stroke determines and controls the rest. The oarsmen have but one will. That is obedience, a will attuned to the will of another, and without that attuning of the will no knowledge of Christ can ever be gained. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Let us proceed a step further, and again under the guidance of the Apostle John. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God." Then how many of us know Him? No love: no knowledge! May we not slightly alter the former word of the Apostle, and read it thus—"He that saith, I know Him, and loveth not, is a liar." It would be just as reasonable for a man without eyes to claim he sees the stars, as for a man without love to claim he knows the Lord. Without love we cannot know Christ. What is love? It is indefinable, as indefinable as fragrance or light. Our descriptive words at the best are only vague and remote. But we cannot define a sentiment, we can sometimes suggest it by its effects, and this will suffice for our immediate purpose. Love is "good-will toward men." Observe, good *will* towards men, not merely good wish; willing good, not only wishing it! To wish a thing and to will it, may be quite two different things. Wishing may be only a sweet and transient sentiment; willing implies effort, active and persistent work. Wishing dreams; willing creates. Love is good-will, the

willing of good toward all men, the effort to think the best of all men, and to help them on to the best. That is love. "He that loveth not . . . knoweth not God." Then good-will is essential to knowledge of God; without it knowledge can never be. Now gather the argument together. No obedience, no knowledge! No love, no knowledge! To know Jesus, I must obey; to know Jesus, I must love. Therefore knowledge implies a certain relationship God-ward, and a certain relationship man-ward. I am to have a will that seeks the doing of His commandments; I am to have a disposition that seeks the good of all His children. All this is included in this most vital and pregnant word, "to know Christ."

Let us advance a further step. Habits are formed by repetition of acts. Much repetition creates what we very expressively call "second nature." As if the first nature had passed away, and we had acquired another! That which was at first almost unnatural, has now become quite natural. It began in discomfort; it ended in ease.

Take the habit of walking. It began in great uncertainties. It was natural to creep; to walk was a task. But repetition of effort created the power of poise. The repetition of difficult acts resulted in fixed habits, and now we walk as easily and as unconsciously as we breathe. It has become our nature. That which begins in careful and almost painful thoughtfulness becomes at last a spontaneous and unconscious habit. Take the habit of reading. In our early stages a printed page was a very irregular country. We could not travel far without coming to apparently insuperable hills. Every letter was a conscious quantity, every word was regarded with curious suspicion. But repetition of effort induced a habit, and now we can read a page of print and not be conscious of the presence of a single letter, so absorbed are we in the mystic thought behind. Reading has become natural; that is to say, it has become a spontaneous and unconscious habit. Now, lift up the argument, for here, at any rate, natural law prevails in the spiritual world. In the spiritual world

repetition of acts creates spontaneous habit. It is possible to so persistently subject the will to the will of Christ, that the subjection becomes an unconscious habit. We can so repeatedly bend our wills to His, that the inclination becomes perfectly natural—the supernatural becomes natural—and we do it as if by instinct. It is possible to do the will of Christ as naturally as we breathe. That is a tremendous ideal, but I am set to preach ideals. There is more than enough of low compromise round about us. It is well to lift our eyes to the hills, and this is one of the great heights, that a man can so persistently and determinedly bend his will to the Christ's that the inclination becomes permanent and natural, and he at last does unconsciously what at first was a heavy task. As for the other element in the content of knowledge, the willing of good to my fellows, the same great law prevails. If I determinedly and repeatedly *will* good to my fellows; if in learning the gracious art I am as painstaking as in the cultivation of any other habit, then the willing of good shall become a permanent

disposition, a spontaneous habit, a fruitful instinct in my common life. Now again gather up the argument. To know Christ, I must obey, and obedience can become a spontaneous habit. To know Christ, I must love, and loving can become a spontaneous habit. To know Christ, I must will as Christ wills. To know Christ, I must love as Christ loves. *To know Christ, I must have the habit of His willing and His loving.* To know Christ, I must have the habits of Christ. And what is this but to say that to know Christ I must be like Him?

So are we driven a further step on towards our conclusion. The principle arrived at is this, that knowledge necessitates likeness. Have we not abundant proof of its truth? Two unlikes cannot know each other. Two men who are morally unlike each other may live together, and neither can possibly know the contents of the other's life. He may be able to name them; he does not know them. How would you describe pain to a man who has never experienced it? He cannot know it. He

cannot even imagine it. Pain is only known by the pain-ridden. Knowledge implies likeness. There are women in our midst who can form no possible conception of jealousy. They have no jealous substance within them, and they cannot know it. Knowledge implies likeness. The principle has a wide application. To *know* you must *be*. To know music, you must be musical. To know art, you must be artistic. To know Christ, you must be Christlike. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments"—who has not the likeness of His will—"is a liar." "He that loveth not"—who has not the likeness of His love—"knoweth not God." To have His will and to have His love, is to have His life, and therefore to know Him, just as He is, just what He is, our kinsman Christ! "This is life, . . . to know Jesus." To know Jesus is to share His life! His life is eternal. Life eternal is just Christ-life. This is life eternal, to have life like Christ, to know Him in spirit and in truth.

WHAT I WOULD IF I COULD

TEXT: "*Some would have taken Him, but . . .*"—John 7 : 44.

IF the opportunity had been favourable, they would have taken Him. They were in the mood for it. Their inclinations were formed. Their purpose was set. In spirit everything was ready, but the opportunity did not serve. What was the difference between these men and those who eventually perfected their desire and carried it out? Is there any difference in temperament, in purpose, in moral colour and constitution? Is there any difference in soul? No, the difference is only in the opportunity. There is no difference between the Guy Fawkes who lays his powder barrels and fires them, and the Guy Fawkes who lays his powder barrels but is prevented from firing. Guy Fawkes does not become virtuous because his programme was not accomplished. He remains the same. He

would have been no worse if his designs had been attained. Spiritually he did the deed. It was only an unexpected antagonism which prevented the visible achievement.

"Some would have taken Him, but . . ." If they had had the opportunity, they would have done it. See, then, opportunity, does not create character, but only reveals it. Opportunity makes patent what has hitherto been latent. The taking of the Master would not have rendered these men vicious or malicious; it would only have declared their device.

Out of this there arises a very clear and all-important principle. What we would be, if opportunity presented, that we are. Our "would-bes" are the truest index of our character. A murderous hand may be stricken aside; that makes the man no less a murderer. Everything relating to murder was present, except the opportunity. What would the stuff within me make, if opportunity presented to me the circumstances of a Cain? Are my dispositions such that I should repeat his act? What

I would be in certain conditions that I am. The absence of fulfilment affords no proof of the presence of virtue or vice. That the chained dog cannot get at me does not prove him virtuous. He would, if he could. The biting would not create his vice; he is vicious; the venom is in him. My safety is only consequent upon his inability. I am not obligated to his temper; I am in debt to his chain. The inclination is there; the fulfilment is prevented. The character of the dog is to be found in the nature of his inclination. What we would do, that, in the sight of God, we have done. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Let us take the light of this principle and carry it round about common life. Let us give another application to our text. "Some of them would have sold the margarine for butter, but . . ." Then in the sight of God they have done it. Sin that is uncommitted for fear of discovery is in reality done. A man who would label his margarine "butter," but who refrains for fear of the inspector, is essentially

bad at the heart. Badness of this kind will find an outlet somewhere. Sewer gas continually seeks for an exit. Supposing one man has labelled his margarine "butter," and another man has desisted for fear of discovery, and supposing they were both brought into the presence of Him whose eyes are as flame, wherein would be the difference? Both would stand condemned.

"Some would have absented themselves from worship, but . . ." But what? "But for the look of the thing." Then a man who would have absented himself was never present. People who attend God's house for the look of the thing, never come at all. They would be absent if they dared. Then what they would do, they do. "These people draw nigh to Me, but their hearts are far from Me."

"Some would have withdrawn their subscriptions, but . . ." But what? "But for the published lists." Then they have withdrawn them. On this plane, the man who would do, has done. He

whose liberality is determined by his publicity, has never given unto the Lord. "By Him actions are weighed." He does not count the amount of the offertory. He notes the disposition of the giver. "Bring no more vain oblations." The vain oblation is the gift without the giver, and with God such giving is not received. Here then is the principle I am seeking to expound. We are no better than our inclinations. Our wishes denote far more than our deeds. A man's desires register his attainments.

Now let us turn the whole matter round. If we are measured by our "would-bes," the principle would have application not only to vice, but to virtue. We are not judged by our fulfilments, but by our aspirations. "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart." The desire to build the temple was interpreted by the Lord as a temple already built. What we would if we had the opportunity, we shall be credited with having done.

"Some would have gone to serve in the

foreign field, but . . ." But what? "The door was never opened." Then, in the sight of God, such men and women have gone. To God they are foreign missionaries, and the glory of the mission-field is theirs. They would have gone, but there was an old mother to care for at home, or an invalid sister to watch, or an imbecile brother to tend. They toiled on here in the homeland, but their heart was ever away in lands of bondage and night. God will take the will for the deed. These men and women will wear the missionary's crown. Their "would-be" will be regarded as a "well-done."

"Some would have given much to the cause of the King, but . . ." But what? "Their means were straitened, and they had great difficulty in keeping the wolf from the door." They gave their little mite to the Lord's work with a great desire that it might have been more. They gave a mite plus a "would-do." Such giving is never to be estimated by the

monetary quantity of the gift. "This poor woman hath given more than all." "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted with God."

"Some would have given themselves to active Christian service, but . . ." But what? "They are bed-ridden." They are chronic invalids. They lie in the bondage of continual pain. How will they be regarded in the day of the great reckoning? They will be judged by their "would-bes." Their life will be estimated not by its attainments, but by its inclinations. But is there not some little peril in thus distinguishing between inclinations and attainments, as though inclination in itself were not a great attainment? Oh, the mystic energy of many a "would-be"! The "would-be" is a prayer, and the fragrance of heaven is made of the perfume of prayer. "Golden vessels full of odours which are the prayers of saints." We cannot measure the influences of the "would-bes" that lie like fervent flames in the hearts of many of the saints of

God. They are creating an atmosphere, and in this atmosphere much of the best work of the kingdom is accomplished. Our "would-bes" will constitute our crowns.

AWE AND TRUST

TEXT: "*Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*"—Psalm 4: 4, 5.

"STAND in awe, and sin not." This seems to be a little remote from the phraseology of modern religious life. Our vocabulary is of a different type and order. Words like awe, fear, trembling, appear to be almost obsolete. Our speech finds its emphasis in such words as happiness, joy, peace, comfort. The Psalmist throws us back to quite a different plane. "Stand in awe, and sin not!" This man has had a vision of the great white Throne. He has been contemplating the terrors of the Lord. He has listened to the awful imperatives. He has had a glimpse of the midnight of alienation. He spent his days in levity, as though God and duty were distant and irrelevant trifles. But

now his eyes have come upon the whiteness of the Eternal, the unsullied sovereignty, the holiness that would not be trifled with, and his careless walk is sharply arrested. His levity is changed into trembling. His indifference is broken up in awe. We have seen the experience in miniature, even in the fellowship of man with man. One man has introduced a piece of indecent or questionable foolery in the presence of another man, and he has been immediately confronted with a face which chilled his blood and froze his levity into a stilled and wondering silence. No man's life will ever be deepened into fruitful awe if he has not seen similar features confronting him in the countenance of God. "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil." "Woe is me, for mine eyes have seen the King." We have got to see the Face if we are to be checked in our frivolity, and if we are to feel our indecencies blazing within us like a destructive fire.

Why is there so little awe in our religious

lives to-day? Why is there so little fruitful fear? How is it that we have altogether lost the apostolic trembling? Is it because we have lost that Face? Do we intentionally hide it? The whiteness of the Saviour is not alluring. We prefer the sweetness. And so we gather up all the gracious promises. We lift them out of their context. We see them out of relationship to the general body of truth. We lose their proportion, and they become hurtful rather than sanctifying. Promises gathered in their relationship to warnings will tend to our good. Flowers found in God's world as He plants them will do us no harm; but massed together in heaps as they are by the perfume-makers in Southern France, they become breeders of disease. It is not intended that we should accumulate heaps of gracious promises, and overlook the severities of Revelation. Found as Christ proclaimed them they enliven and cheer; thoughtlessly massed together they lull into spiritual stupor.

We can see the same tendency in our choice of hymns. We do not like the hymns in which the whirlwind sweeps and drives. We prefer the hymns that are just filled with honey. And so the "sweet" hymns are the favourites, and the sweeter they are the more welcome they are to our palates. We have partially dropped the hymns that harrow and alarm, and which minister to our fear. Some of us have got what we sometimes call a "sweet Jesus." We know Him only as the Speaker of gentle and condescending speech, and of tender, winsome invitation. We have not got a Jesus before Whom we frequently "stand in awe." We glide on in the religious life heedlessly, and at no moment do we stand appalled.

Many of us have lost the severities of the New Testament, and we have nothing to fear. Shall I recall one or two of these forgotten severities? "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name

done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Whatever may be the meaning of these words, they are of such import as to make us "stand in awe." They indicate a severity which is the corollary of the Lord's holiness. It is because these terrors are left out in our religious conceptions and in our preaching, that the frivolity of men is gratified and coddled by illegitimate sweetness. In a memorandum, written in the year of his ordination, Newman said: "Those who make comfort the great subject of their preaching seem to mistake the end of their ministry. Holiness is the great end, comfort is a cordial, but no one drinks cordials from morning to night." We must re-proclaim the elements of severity which minister to a bracing

holiness. Men do not feel the power of the Gospel when in Christ they discern nothing to fear. Many men are lost because they do not see the great white Throne. Thomas Boston said that the net of the Gospel needed to be weighted with the leads of the terrors of the law, or it would lightly float on the surface and no fish be caught. We must steadily keep in view the sterner patches of the New Testament teaching. We must contemplate the whiteness of the Eternal, and stand in awe.

"*Commune with your own heart upon your own bed, and be still.*" When we have gazed upon the undefiled heights, upon the holiness of God, we are then to hold a soliloquy with ourselves. In his "Saint's Everlasting Rest," Richard Baxter says that every good Christian is a good preacher to his own soul. The very same methods which a minister uses in his preaching to others, every Christian should endeavour after in speaking to himself. Having seen the Throne, let us hold converse with our

own hearts. "Commune with thine own heart *upon thy bed.*" The darkness of night is the most appropriate season. There is nothing in these hours to ensnare the eyes and to entice the mind to distraction. In the darkness introspection becomes easy. "Be still." Shut the door. Silence every distraction. Reject every mental intruder. Take nothing with thee into thy heart, except the vision of the Throne. Then call out the contents of thy heart. Challenge them; question them; cross-examine them. Let nothing remain hid. Let thy awed feeling be with thee in the inquest. Search out every corner. Set everything in the light of His countenance. You ask if it is difficult work? Yes. The most difficult work to which man can apply himself. The revelation adds fear to awe, and our condition becomes appalling. Once let a man go with the awed vision into his own spirit, and he will be filled with the trembling which is the earnest of a great salvation. "What must I do to be saved?"

"*Offer the sacrifices of righteousness.*" Whatever these words may have meant to the Psalmist, they can only mean one thing for us who live in the light of the Gospel day. When a man has contemplated the dazzling holiness of God, and in self-communion has discovered his own dark appalling need, and, full of trembling, turns again to the Father, he has only one resource. He must "offer the sacrifice of righteousness." Christ Jesus is our "Righteousness." "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." We have no hope but in His death. In His offering we re-discover our completeness. In His sacrifice we find our life and security. This is no beautiful theory detached from the hard facts of burdensome life. A million souls can set their testimony to it and seal it to be true. When they had ransacked their own heart and found it to be a nest of defilement, and they were filled with fear, they turned to the love of Calvary and found provision for both fear and defilement, and

in the crucified Christ found purity and rest.

> "Not the labour of my hands,
> Can fulfil Thy laws' demands;
> Could my zeal no respite know,
> Could my tears for ever flow,
> All for sin could not atone;
> Thou must save, and Thou alone."

"*And put your trust in the Lord.*" How graciously the passage closes! The awe and the trembling converge in fruitful trust! The discovery of the holy Sovereignty, the discovery of personal defilement, the discovery of a Redeemer, are consummated in the discovery of rest. When I have found my "Righteousness" my part is now to trust. The awe, the purity of the holy Soverignty will become mine. Trust keeps open the line of communication between the soul and God. Along that line convoys of blessedness are brought into the heart; manifold gifts of grace for the weak and defenceless spirit. When I trust I keep open the "highway of the Lord," and along that road there come to

me from the Eternal my bread, my water, my instructions, my powers of defence. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." I can "work out my own salvation with fear and trembling."

THE LIVING WATER

TEXT: "*Everyone that drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life.*"—John 4: 13, 14.

"EVERYONE that drinketh of this water shall thirst again." It is not difficult to discern traces of this thirst in the faces of those whom we meet in the common way. If we take our stand at the corner of the street and scan the faces of the passing crowd, it is only now and again that we gaze upon a countenance which is significant of peace. How rarely the face suggests the joy and the serenity of a healthy satisfaction! We are confronted by an abounding unrest! The majority of people seem to be afflicted with the pain of unsatisfied want. The very faces are suggestive of a disquieting thirst. We have a varied vocabulary in which we describe this prevailing condition:—"Un-

rest" "discontented," "dissatisfied," "not right with himself." And very frequently this internal disquietude manifests itself in external irritableness, in a general disagreeableness towards one's neighbours and friends. Let us quietly contemplate some of the people who are the victims of consuming and disquieting thirst. There is the great army of men and women who are possessed by the *fever of worry*. There is no calm collectedness about their life. They have no seasons of cool reflection. Their life is feverish from morning till night. How has the fever arisen? Sometimes fever is the result of a chill. A cold wind suddenly arises and blows across the life, a wind of disappointment which blights some happy ambition; a wind of bad news which chills us in the midst of a feast. These wintry visitations are often productive of subsequent worry, and they issue in spiritual feverishness. We become "heated hot with burning fears." There is also a large company of men and women who may be described as dominated by

the *lust of bliss*. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O *pleasure*!" These are the souls that are always thirsting after new sensations. The old delights speedily pall, and afford no gratification to the jaded palate. They require something of a more piquant flavour. It is like dram drinking; at the commencement they find pleasure in dilutions; in the long run they take it "neat." There is also the army of those who are scorched with the *craving of carnal passion*. Any reference to this can be made in a word. It is a bonfire that licks up all the cool dews and moisture of the spiritual life. Every leaf withers, every flower languishes and fades. The soul that is imprisoned in a temple of carnality is stricken with indescribable thirst. Then there are those in whose lives there is *the smouldering fire of a dull indifference*. There is thirst even in those whom indifference seems to reign; nay, the indifferent are often the most restless in their racing about among the pools. They call their

restlessness by quite another name, but its proper name is spiritual thirst. And then, lastly, there are those who are burdened with the sense of sin, and who are possessed by a fervent longing for the living God. "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." "I thirst for the living God."

By what resources do men seek to allay their thirst? They are weary in their worry; they are tired in their pleasures, they are sick of their passions, how do they seek to quieten the soul within them, and to lead their life into rest? Too often resort is made to the "waters of the earth." We try to allay a spiritual thirst by a carnal draught. When Newman in his early life was burdened with the sense of his own shortcomings in the presence of his Lord, and his letters home lacked their usual buoyancy, his mother wrote to him:— "Your father and I fear very much from the tone of your letters that you are

depressed. We fear you debar yourself a proper quantity of wine." That is a type of suggestion which is often made to people who are troubled with spiritual unrest. They are recommended to material ministries by which their feverish unrest is only intensified and inflamed. But they "thirst again." Others make an attempt to realise satisfaction and peace by immersing themselves in stimulants like novel-reading and theatre-going, and in the manifold pleasures of society. They intensify the social stimulant. Yet they "thirst again." Others plunge more deeply into business. The songster is languishing! How then? Re-gild his cage. The soul is languishing! How then? Re-gild her cage. Seek for more gold, more gold, and surround the soul with material treasure. And yet the soul refuses to be appeased, and "thirsts again." Or, again, we give opiates to our disquieted and feverish souls. How people find an opiate in making a promise to amend. They find contentment in their intentions.

But the satisfaction is only transient. They speedily awake out of their unnatural rest, and they are thirsty still. Others give themselves the opiate of self-disparagement. Many a man thinks he is becoming better because he severely condemns himself. They esteem it a sign of virtue to denounce themselves as fools. They discover a sort of spiritual comfort from their own self-severity. All these are pitiable evasions. At the best they are only transient ministries, which, when their immediate influence passes away, leave us in deepened disquietude and intensified unrest.

Now let us turn to Jesus. "*He would have given thee living water.*" The Master deals with the painful thirst of men by bringing to them the gift of spiritual energy. He pours into the languishing soul spiritual forces that refresh and vitalise, that restore and maintain. John Calvin says :—"There is no sap and vigour in us until the Lord waters us by His Spirit." The coming of the Living Water into the

life is creative of "sap and vigour." All the powers of the life are vitalised. The languishing conscience, the impaired affections, the sluggish emotion, the enfeebled will, all are invigorated by the inrush into the soul of "the river of water of life." We become "trees of the Lord," and the "trees of the Lord are full of sap."

"The water that I shall give you shall be *in you a well.*" It is the gift of internal energy; the resources are within us. I stood a little while ago in the fine old ruin of Middleham Castle, I passed beyond the outer shell, and beyond the inner defences into the keep, and there in the innermost sanctum of the venerable pile was the old well. The castle was independent of outside supplies. If it were besieged it had resources of water at its own heart. The changing seasons made no difference to the gracious supply. That is the purpose of our Master in placing the "well" within us. He wants to make us independent of external circumstances. Whatever be the season that reigns without, He wants ful-

ness and vitality to reign within. So the Master's gift is the gift of a well, "springing up," leaping up, "into eternal life." "We are renewed by His Spirit in the inner man."

"Whosoever drinketh . . . shall *never thirst.*" It is a spiritual energy. It is an eternal energy. It is a persistent energy. "Never thirst." That does not mean that in the Christian life desire is ended. "The ill of all ills is the death of desire." In the redeemed life desire is intense and wakeful. There is desire, but no despairing. There is longing, but no languishing. There is fervour, but no fever. There is aspiration and contentment. There is striving and rest. We still thirst for the fulness of grace not yet received, but there is no pain in the thirst. In the Christian life the very thirst for greater fulness is itself a delight. If I may quote Calvin again: "Believers know desire, but they do not know drought."

And what is the glorious issue of this indwelling energy of grace? "It shall be

in him a well of water *springing up into eternal life.*" The grace continues with us, and overflows into a blessed immortality. The Spirit that redeems will also perfect. Whatever may be our estate when it finds us, our ultimate attainments will be the likeness of the Lord. "The living water rises from Heaven, and rises towards Heaven." We shall at length be presented blameless before the Throne of God. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

THE PALSIED SOUL

TEXT: Mark 2: 1-4.

HERE is a swift series of pictures both forceful and pathetic. There is the helpless paralytic, his face now and again revealing the faint flickering light of a glimmering hope, like the spasms of diluted sunshine which sometimes break through the murky November gloom. And here are the four friends, sympathetic, optimistic, perfectly assured, urging their way through the thick-set surging crowd. And here are "certain of the Scribes" sitting in the house, cold, unemotional, friendly only to precedent and tradition, and jealous for the sustained authority of their own school. And in the midst of it all, the Master! What does He think about it? What is the nature of His aspirations? What does He see? *He sees the invisible.* The merely material becomes the unsubstantial, and the spiritual stands revealed. The picturesque setting

melts away, and the unseen background of dispositions emerges into view. Bodies become transparencies, and the naked spirit stands unveiled in the searching light of the uncreated beam. The harvest of the Master's eye is gathered from the mystic fields of the soul. He gazes at the bearers and sees their faith. He looks behind the rebellious limbs of the palsied and sees the servitude of the soul. He pierces the hard, impassive masks of the Scribes, and reads their innermost thoughts. Everywhere it is the unseen which becomes conspicuous; the spiritual becomes emphatic. Let us look at the scene through the Master's interpreting eyes, and in His light we may see light.

The Master sees the faith of the bearers. "Jesus seeing their faith." There we have the faith in its last analysis. Its essential ingredient is simple confidence. It is not primarily the apprehension of a doctrine, it is simple trust in a person. To have faith in Jesus is to have confidence in the ability and reliability of Jesus to do what He claims

to do. We have a similar instance in the graphic narrative recorded in the ninth chapter of John. I know that towards the end of that great chapter the once blind man is confronted with the mighty demand: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Yes, but the question was asked only after his sight had been restored. Simple faith had been manifested before Jesus sought to incite him to the grip of a large and vitalising doctrine. "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam." The man obeyed and went. That was the vital element in his faith. The simple faith paved the way to the larger belief. The healed man was ready for the unveiling of the personality of the Healer; but first of all the primary faith consisted in untroubled confidence, in perfect trust that Jesus was as good as His word, and would make His word good. So it is in the passage before us. These four men had trust in the Saviour's trustworthiness. They were assured that He had the power and the disposition to fulfil His own programme—"The recovery of sight to the

blind, and the setting at liberty of them that are bruised."

Now if simple trust be the primary ingredient in faith, see how such faith in Jesus operates in the common life. The faith of these friends of the paralytic had three characteristics. It was energetic. It was a workful faith. Vital faith and vital energy are inseparable. There is a wonderful little list of inseparables in the Epistle to the Thessalonians. "Your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope." Faith evinces itself in work, and love in labour, and hope in patience. Where there is no faith, there is a consequent loss of heart and loss of courage, and strength is dissipated in waste of retreat. The faith of these men was full of power, applying itself as a splendid dynamic in actual service. It was philanthropic. Faith is primarily individualistic. Influentially it is grandly socialistic. The sweep of its energy inevitably enwraps the lives of others. In the energy of its prayers, its ambitions, its strivings after holiness, we discover a force

which is humane and philanthropic, "looking not only at its own things, but also on the things of others." Faith laid hold of this poor paralytic, the man of the palsied body and soul, and carried him to the Master's feet, it is inventive. Unbelief soon exhausts its resources: it makes a hopeless and therefore a lukewarm attempt, fails and turns back and says: "I told you so." Faith is full of ideas, expediencies, designs. Faith is fertile, and plans devices. Does the road seem closed this way? Faith says: We will try another. Have the usual methods failed to reach the masses? Then faith will employ the ministry of the Salvation Army. Have the ordinary services proved uninviting? Then faith will begin a P.S.A. When faith could not get near one way, she uncovered the roof! This man must be brought to the Master, and the pushing inventiveness of an energetic faith, makes a way, and lays its burden at the Healer's feet.

The Master sees the spiritual misery of the palsied. Here lies the man. His muscular

action has lost its motion owing to some insidious disease upon the nerves. He can no longer command the muscular activities of his own body. Here he lies a helpless log. The Master looks at him, through him, and, behold! another kind of paralysis is revealed. The man cannot command the activities of his own soul. His spiritual volition is impaired. His body is imprisoned in the palsy, his soul is imprisoned in sin. The four friends had laid the paralysed body at the Master's feet, and they expected that the great Healer would immediately address Himself to its clamant needs. How startled they would be when the first words of the Master had no reference to the body, but were addressed to some need apparently remote. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The Lord addresses Himself to the direct need, to the palsied spirit. He sets Himself to liberate the powers and dignities of the soul. The paralysis of the soul is unveiled by the Bible in startling phraseology. Let me recall one or two of the phrases, that we may sharpen our con-

ception by what is meant by the hideous presence of sin. "Sin dwelleth in me": my personality is a kind of house, and sin is the master of the house. "Sin reigneth in me": sin is not only my master but my tyrant. "I was sold unto sin": I am a piece of merchandise, and I am disposed of into slavery; sold to a lust; to an evil desire; to the habit of greed; to the passion of jealousy, or to the ugly genius of revenge. "They are all under sin"; we are under its crushing domination, as though its feet were upon our necks. "Sin abounds": it is a horrible disease that scatters its prolific germs over every faculty and disposition of life. In all these phrases I see what is meant by the appalling sovereignty of sin. It is a dominion which results in a moral and spiritual paralysis, every dignity and prerogative in the life being crushed in an unclean and debasing servitude. And so to this sin-bound soul the Master brings the gracious evangel of forgiveness. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The forgiveness of the Lord is not some sweet

and ineffectual sentiment. It is the mystic and mighty energy of creation engaged in the work of re-creation. When the Lord says "Forgiven," the life that was locked and imprisoned in icy winter feels round about it the influence of a warm and expansive spring. The Bible appears almost to wrestle for a varied phraseology in which to reveal the realities of this glorious deliverance. Sins are to be "blotted out," "wiped away," "covered," "taken away." Where sins abounds grace doth much more abound. The forces of spiritual health are in the ascendant, and the powers of evil and night are dethroned and in retreat. "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come." When the Master said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee," an angel might have witnessed: "This thy brother was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found."

THE BUSINESS INSTINCT IN RELIGION

TEXT: *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman.*—Matt. 13 : 45.

IF the citizen of the Kingdom of God can be suggestively compared to a merchantman, there must be something about him exceedingly businesslike and enterprising. Our Lord appears to teach that business qualities are needful in the pursuit of the things that are needful in the Kingdom of God. I am to be as businesslike in my religious life as I am in my commercial life. The peril proclaimed is this, that men who are exceedingly businesslike in the market are exceedingly unbusinesslike in the sanctuary, and that men who are thoroughly alert and enterprising in earning their daily bread are sleepy and resourceless in their pursuit of a holy life. There are many men who are sharp and shrewd and all alive in the world, who are dull and sluggish in the

Church. Men, somehow or other, drop their business instincts when they go about their Father's business. Now this parable is an appeal to men to bring into religion the same wide-awake business capabilities which they exercise in the affairs of the world. If men would be as businesslike in the pursuit of holiness as they are in their pursuit of gold, they would speedily become spiritual millionaires, wealthily endowed with the unsearchable riches of Christ. The perfecting counsel of the parable is therefore this: Be as businesslike in the building up of character as you are in the building up of fortune. Bring your business gifts and aptitudes in the affairs of business, and exercise them in the acquisition of the treasures of Heaven.

Now I propose to go into business life and call out two or three of the qualities which are essential to worldly success. And then I propose to carry them over to the life of the spirit, where we shall find them to be the secrets of perpetual growth.

Here, then, is a quality which is greatly

esteemed in the ways of the world—the *quality of alertness*. It is characteristic of every successful merchantman. If I listen to the ordinary speech of the man of the world, I find how great is the value which he places upon this gift. "A man must have all his wits about him." "It is the early bird that catches the worm." These are recognised maxims in the way of success, and they point to the commanding necessity of an alertful spirit. A merchantman must be alert for the detection of hidden perils. He must be alert for the perception of equally hidden opportunity. He must be alert for the recognition of failing methods. His eyes must clearly see where old roads are played out, and where new ground may be broken. Let us carry the suggestion over into the affairs of the Kingdom. The Scriptures abound in counsel to alertness. "Awake, awake!" "Watch ye!" "Let us watch and be sober!" "Watching unto prayer." It is an all-essential ingredient in the life of the progressive saint. He is to be on the alert againt pitfalls, against

bad bargains, against selling pearls for refuse, against impoverishing compromise. "Watch ye, lest ye fall into temptation." He is to be on the alert for opportunity. What eyes our Lord wants us to have in the things of the Kingdom! "Watch ye, for at such an hour when ye think not the Son of Man comes." We never know when the august Visitor may turn up. He may appear in some tame and commonplace duty, and if we are not "all alive" we shall never suspect His presence, and we shall miss His appearing. He is always showing His face, and to have knowledge of His presence is great gain. Therefore it is all-needful that we watch every colour, that we look into the eyes of every moment, if perchance we may see the opportunity of becoming rich in the treasures of Heaven. So are we to be on the alert for the conversion of everything into spiritual gold. "Buy up the opportunity." We are especially to look at things that appear to be useless, lest they turn out to be the raw material of the garments of Heaven. Sir Titus Salt, walking

along the quay of Liverpool, saw a pile of unclean waste. He saw it with very original eyes, and had the vision of a perfected and beautiful product. He saw the possibilities in discarded refuse, and he bought the opportunity. That is perhaps the main business of the successful citizen of the Kingdom, the conversion of waste. This disappointment which I have had to-day, what can I make out of it? What an eye it wants to see the ultimate gain in checked and chilled ambition—

> "To stretch a hand through time, and catch
> The far-off interest of tears."

This grief of mine, what can I make of it? Must I leave it as waste in the tract of the years, or can it be turned into treasure? This pain of mine, is it only a lumbering burden, or does the ungainly vehicle carry heavenly gold? It is in conditions of this kind that the spiritual expert reveals himself. He is all "alive unto God," and seeing the opportunity he seizes it like a successful merchantman.

I go again into business life in order to gain a knowledge of the attributes of success. And this is what I hear one man say to another who has risen to fortune: "Everything about him goes like clockwork." Of another man whose days witness a gradual degeneracy quite another word is spoken: "He has no system, no method, everything goes by the rule of chance." Then the *quality of method* appears to be one of the essentials of a successful man of affairs. Is this equally true in the things of the Kingdom? How many there are of us who, in our religious life, are loose, slipshod, unmethodical! How unsystematic we are in our worship and our prayers! Our worldly business would speedily drop into ruin if we applied to it the same inconsiderate ways with which we discharge the duties of our religion. William Law, in his inspired book, "Call to a Devout Life," has instructed us in methodical devotion. He systematically divides the day, devoting to certain hours and certain seasons special kinds of praises and prayers. This was the

early glory of the Methodist denomination. Their distinctiveness consisted in the systematic ordering of the Christian life. I know that too much method may become a bondage, but too little may become a rout. Too much red tape is creative of servitude, but to have no red tape at all is to be the victim of disorder. There is a happy medium between chaos and bondage. There is a reasonable method which leaves play for the spontaneous exercises of thought and affection. We need some method in prayer. We can so habituate ourselves to pray at certain seasons, that when the hour comes round, the soul is instinctively found upon its knees. We need some method in the arrangement of our prayers, lest they settle down into narrowness and poverty, and are wanting in sympathy and appreciation. We need method in our spiritual labours. Even the ministry on behalf of others requires to be regular and systematic. We need to have method of benefactions. It is the people who do not give by method who are always

prone to greatly exaggerate the amount they give. Giving irregularly, they are ignorant of their giving, and their selfish instinct prompts them to think it great. A healthy citizen of the Kingdom of God is like unto a merchantman, and his life is regulated by vigorous order.

I go again into the realm of business, and here is a sentence that encounters me from one who knows the road: "The habit of *firm decision* is indispensable to a man of business." The real business man waits till the hour is come, and then acts decisively. "He strikes while the iron is hot." An undecisive business man lives in perpetual insecurity. He meanders along in wavering uncertainty until his business house has to be closed. Is not this element of decision needful in the light of the Spirit? Religious life is too apt to be full of "ifs" and "buts" and "perhapses" and "peradventures." I am experiencing at this moment a fervent holy spiritual impulse. In what consists my salvation? To strike while the iron is hot? "Suffer me first to go and bid them

farewell." No, the iron will speedily grow cold. While the holy thing glows before you, strongly decide and concentrate your energies in supporting your decision. "I am resolved what to do." That was said by a man of the world. Let it be the speech of the man of the Kingdom of God.

I will go again into the ways of the world, that I may find instruction for the way of the Kingdom. I find that in business life it is essential that a man must run risks and make ventures. He must be daring, and he must have the *element of courage*. What says the man of the world? "Nothing venture, nothing win." "Faint heart never won fair lady." Faint heart never wins anything. John Bunyan's Faintheart had repeatedly to be carried. Has the citizen of the Kingdom to risk anything? Indeed he has. He must risk the truth. A lie might appear to offer him a bargain, but he must risk the truth. Let him sow the truth, even though the threatened harvest may be tears. Let him venture the truth, even though great and

staggering loss seems to be drawn to his door. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." A man has again and again to make his choice between Christ and thirty pieces of silver. Let him make the venture, let the silver go; risk the loss! If it means putting up the shutters he will go out with Christ! "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." Alertness, method, decision, courage! These are some of the qualities that are needed by the citizen of the Kingdom. With these splendid business instincts he will do fine bargaining, and become rich in faith and hope and in love.

THE MINISTRY OF PRAISE

TEXT: "*I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee; I will sing praise to Thy name, O thou Most High.*"—Psalm 9: 1, 2.

"*I* WILL *praise Thee.*" That is a note that is too commonly silent in our religious life. Even many of our consecration pledges avoid any reference to the duty of praise. We have our prayer-meetings, and our self-denial weeks and our days of humiliation, but we rarely gather together for the supremely exhilarating business of praise. We extend our hands in supplication, we do not jubilantly uplift them in adoration. There are ten who cry "God be merciful" for one who sings "God be praised." There were ten lepers who possessed sufficient faith to cry for healing; there was only one returned to engage in the ministry of praise.

Now, here is a man who sets himself to

the business of praise, as though he were about to engage in a great matter. He does not turn to it in any easy, lazy, and indifferent manner. "I will praise Thee *with my whole heart.*" He sets about it with undivided attention, He awakes his entire personality, and devotes all his manifold powers to the ministry of thanksgiving. "With my whole heart." The word heart is a spacious word. It includes all the interior things, all the central things. It includes the will, the power that lies behind all the faculties, the energy that contributes resolution and purpose and directive force. It includes the intellect and, primarily among the powers of mind, the faculties of memory and imagination. When a man comes to the ministry of praise, his memory must be wide awake. He must be able to search his yesterdays, to gather up their suggestiveness, to behold the broad marks of Providence, to see the gracious dealings of the King. He must "call to mind the things that have been." "Thou shalt remember all the way by which

the Lord thy God hath led thee." And when a man comes to the business of praise, his imagination also must be active. He must be able to pierce the outer vestures of things. He must be able to apprehend the grace that hides in a plain face. He must be able to appreciate the mercy that is hidden in gloom. He must be able to feel something of the love of God even in the dark and cloudy day. He must never forget the blue sky even when he is enveloped in fog. And he must also bring to the ministry of praise the worship of his feelings. If the thought is brought into the sanctuary, the feelings will assuredly follow. The tides are governed by the moon; the power of thought governs the flow of the emotions; the trend of the feelings is determined by the "set" of the mind. All this is meant by the phrase, "praising God with the whole heart." Come, will! and make my praise forceful. Come, intellect! and make it enlightened. And come, feeling! and make it affectionate. "All that is

within me, praise and bless His Holy Name."

I will show forth all Thy marvellous works. When a man has got his whole heart busy in praising God, he will have some marvellous things to show. If will and intellect and emotion are all engaged in worship, there will be no difficulty in discovering the wonderful works of God. "I will *show forth.*" The suggestion is just this, he will score it as with a mark, he will not allow it to slip by unrecorded. He will be his own scribe. He will be as a man "with a writer's inkhorn by his side." And he will be always recording the doings of God. He will keep a journal of mercies. For his own sake he will write the things deep upon his memory, that he may recall them and rehearse them in the days when all the daughters of music are brought low. But he will not only register the works, he will also publish them. The word is suggestive not only of a note-book, but of a proclamation. To whom shall we tell the story of God's marvellous works?

"Tell ye your children of it." How rarely we tell our children the story of the goodness of God to us! How rarely we unfold the providence of our own experience! If we have made a journal of mercies, if we have written them deep in the book of our remembrance, let us sometimes turn the pages and read the records to our little ones, if perchance their eyes may be opened to the ever-present loving kindness of the Eternal Lord. To whom shall we tell it? "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren." Cannot we give our brethren a few extracts from the journal? "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." That is far away the best preaching. When a man lays hold of his brother or his neighbour, and says to him, "Thou art in trouble; let me tell thee what the Lord once did to me," that is of all preaching most pregnant with strength and consolation. To whom shall we tell it? "Declare his glory among the heathen." There are people who have never heard the story. "Tell it out among the heathen." The

day will be fruitful in opportunity. Everywhere we shall have space to proclaim our evangel. Let us be the ministers of the Lord's goodness, and make it known in the ways of men.

"*I will be glad and rejoice.*" I do not wonder at this sequence. A man who is bringing his whole heart to the contemplation of the Lord's mercies, and who is making them known to others, must be filled with the spirit of rejoicing. "I will be *glad.*" The word is significant of a brightening up, a dawn, a breaking of cheer, geniality. "I will *rejoice.*" The word is suggestive of the exulting bubbling of the spring. And so the two words together give us the image of the leaping waters with the sunshine on them! And such is always the joy of the Lord. It is fresh as the spring, and as warm and cheering as the sunlight.

"*I will sing praises to Thy name.*" Again I do not wonder. The contemplation of mercies, the giving of thanks, the bearing of witness, the flowing of gladness. Surely

we may expect the sequence of song. And the singing itself will re-act upon the praiseful life and enrich it. William Law devotes a whole chapter to the influence of singing psalms in the devotional life. It brightens the heart; it purifies the spirit. It opens heaven and carries the heart near to it.

> "Sometimes a light surprises
> The Christian while he sings."

When we have got this type of Christian praiseful, rejoicing, singing Christians, we shall have some splendid service rendered to our Lord. Says Thomas Carlyle:— "Give me the man who sings at his work; he will do more, he will do it better, he will persevere longer." The ministries of heaven are accomplished to the accompaniment of a song, "And they sang a new song."

A CHRISTIAN WALK

TEXT: "*Walk in love.*"—Eph. 5 : 2.
TEXT: "*Walk as children of light.*"—Eph. 5 : 8
TEXT: "*Look carefully how ye walk.*"—Eph. 5 : 15.

THERE are characteristic walks. We may sometimes tell the occupation of a man from his gait. There is the firm and springy and masculine step of the soldier. There is the somewhat ungainly and yet alluring walk of the sailor. There is the stately walk of the born prince. We are told that there was a certain imperial dignity about the carriage of the peasant Robert Burns as he moved in Scotland's fairest halls. And concerning the Christian, there is in his spiritual habits a characteristic manner of going. There is a peculiar carriage and behaviour. As he moves down the streets of time there are certain marks which distinguish him from the ordinary crowd. And in the words which I have taken for exposition the Apostle names to us some

of these characteristics. He is distinguished by love and light and circumspection. There is about him a certain disposition of heart, a certain sunny purity of love, and a certain scrupulous and vigilant exactness.

"*Walk in love.*" Now let us see the setting of this. A piece of counsel is often burdensome and depressing, because we ignore its context. If I confine myself merely to the Apostle's words which I have just quoted, it seems as though he were laying upon me the duty of creating a fountain, and that a fountain of love; and the counsel depresses and disheartens me. Is it within my power to be a creator of love? Is it within my province to set fountains in motion? One thing in God's word is perfectly clear, we are never called upon to create fountains. Our duty is to direct the flow of rivers. "All my springs are in Thee." Therefore, if I am in any way discouraged by the counsel of the text, let me look into the context if perchance I may behold the springs. What is it that precedes my text? This welcome word,

"As beloved children." What is it that precedes my text? "As Christ also loved you." The very setting of the words is suggestive of an evangel; the river is born out of these two springs. I am able to walk in love because I am myself beloved. We are everyone beset and engirt with Divine affectional energy. We too often dismiss love as a sentiment, and by sentiment we mean something more ineffective than the coloured vapour of the rainbow. It is because we so frequently interpret love as an idle and passive feeling that we so utterly misconceive the grandeur of the gospel of love. Real love is an energy, as individual in its characteristics as electricity or air. It is a power as real in the spiritual realm as any of the forces which move in the realm of matter. "God loves me." That means infinitely more than that God is well disposed toward me. It far exceeds the hospitality of an open door. It is an outgoing friendly affectionate force. It is a veritable ally moving round about my life, hungering to serve me.

Now it is part of our wonderful endowment that we can resist and repel this Divine energy of love. I go out in the early morning when the air is sweet and soft and clear, and is working in manifold ways the miracle of resurrection. It steals from the open country right up to my house door, yet I can repel it. I can close every window and every crevice, and deny the gracious minister right of entrance. I may be enswathed in electrical force, it may be all about me, yet, if I immure myself in a glass sphere, I can resist its approaches. All I need to do is to erect a non-conductor, and the friendly visitor is paralysed. And when that heavenly air which we call the love of God moves round about my life intent on a reviving ministry, I can shut it from my life, I can erect a non-conductor. I can rear a prejudice. I can establish the barrier of some selfish purpose. I can set up the obstinacy of a stubborn will. I can keep the heavenly visitor at the door. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Or I can let in the heavenly force, as I can

open the window to let in the morning air. How can I let in the love of God? Chiefly by thinking about it. To give thought is to offer hospitality. We entertain the thing that we most contemplate. That thing comes nearest to us which is most prominent in our minds. If I think about the Lord, and about the love of the Lord, if I meditate upon it as it is seen in life and in death, it will steal into my soul as the sweet air steals into the open chamber. And then see what happens. Once admit the energy of the Divine love, and all things are subdued unto itself. If I welcome the love of God, God makes of me a lover. Energised by love, I shall walk in love. "As Christ loved me and gave Himself for me," so shall I give myself in affectionate service to others. In this high sphere, giving is the rule of living. Because I am beloved I shall find myself able to love. Possessing the fountain I can direct the river.

"*Walk as children of light.*" What a radiant vocabulary is elicited even when

we pronounce this beautiful figure! It calls round about it quite a company of shining ones; words, such as cheery, bright, sunny, inspiring optimism! We sometimes say of a little child, "She is the sunshine of the house," and what that little child is in the home, Christians are to be in the long, monotonous streets of the world. We are to be children of light. First of all, is not the figure suggestive of warmth? We are to be like hearth fires. There are so many things to make the world cold. Bereavement makes one very cold. If death comes into our house, even in the middle of June, the house becomes a very clammy place. Disappointment is also very chilling, and all round about us there are souls that are just frozen in the bonds of calamity, and broken ambition and bereavement. I notice that some of the municipal authorities in Canada, during the recent extraordinary severity of the weather, made great fires in the streets, that the poor might gather around them and have the frost taken out of their

paralysed limbs. And is not that a figure of what happened in the olden days, when the Christ of God moved amid the streets of man? Was not He like a great hearth-fire, round which the consciously-cold gathered for cheer and warmth? "Then came all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." How beautiful it is that they drew near to the heavenly flame and felt revived! And is not this the promise that is made to Christians, that they too, like their Master, shall be "burning lights"? "He shall baptize you with fire." The presence of that flame is a splendid argument for our religion. Men may mistake our logic and may ignore our doctrine, but they will be wooed by our fire. But then the figure is not only suggestive of warmth, it is suggestive of guidance. Men need our light in their perplexities and bewilderments. And don't let us think that we need to be "stars" in order to shine. It was by the ministry of a candle that the woman recovered her lost piece of silver. Perhaps it is the candle people, the one or

two talent people, who are of most service in this sphere. It is possible to find a diamond by the aid of a match. I think it is likely that when all things are reckoned up, and the wonderful labours of life are all made known, it will be found that the candle-folk have discharged a wonderful ministry in guiding poor, sick, lost pilgrims to the Saviour's feet. We are called upon to be "burning and shining lights," "children of light."

"*Look carefully how ye walk.*" Literally interpreted, the Apostle seems to say, "Walk with scrupulous exactness, never relax your vigilance, be careful where you put your feet, watch the next step."

> "Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
> The distant scene; one step enough for me."

Now it is usually little things that cause us to stumble. I do not fall over a beer barrel, but I slip over a piece of orange peel. I have never stumbled over a bale of cotton, but if one flag on the pavement projects a third of an inch, I may be brought

to grief. I can avoid the bigger thing; I am careless about the trifles. The little things cause me to stumble. "Look carefully how ye walk." Recollect the importance of details. Life is made up of steps and incidents and trifles. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."

Let me add one concluding word. One way to attain unto a fine walk is to hold company with those that possess it. I think I have noticed when a soldier lad has come home, and he is met by one or two of his old comrades, that as they walk down the streets together, with the hero in the middle, the two mates unconsciously seek to throw off their slouch, and attempt the step and the dignity of their much-drilled and well-disciplined friend. We, too, shall strive after a finer carriage if we hold company with our Lord. "Oh, for a closer walk with God!"

A SONG IN THE NIGHT

TEXT: "*In the Lord put I my trust.*"—Psalm 11 : 1

I. A SONG IN THE NIGHT.

"*In the Lord put I my trust.*" That is a jubilant bird-note, but the bird is singing, not on some fair dewy spring morning, but in a cloudy heaven, and in the very midst of a destructive tempest. A little while ago I listened to a concert of mingled thunder and bird-song. Between the crashing peals of thunder, I heard the clear thrilling note of the lark. The melody seemed to come out of the very heart of the tempest. The environment of this Psalm is stormy. The sun is down. The stars are hid. The waters are out. The roads are broken up, and in the very midst of the darkness and desolation one hears the triumphant cry of the Psalmist, "In the Lord put I my trust." The singer is a soul in difficulty. He is the victim of relentless antagonists. He is

pursued by implacable foes. The fight would appear to be going against him. The enemies are overwhelming, and, just at this point of seeming defeat and imminent disaster, there emerges this note of joyful confidence in God. "In the Lord put I my trust." It is a song in the night.

II. INADEQUATE RESOURCES.

"*How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?*" The Psalmist now hears the voices of counsellors. They are urging him to get away from the exposed plains to the strongholds. They beseech him to fly to the mountains, and to seek security from his foes in the heights. Away in the mountain fastnesses he will be able to hide in perfect security, but to the Psalmist the suggested defences are inadequate. The enemy can reach him there. Evil has a long-range ministry. He will be discovered in his hiding place, and will be wounded and defeated even in the heights, "For lo, the wicked bend their bow; they make ready their arrow

upon the string, that they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart." Against these imperfect defences the Psalmist proclaims his own confident boast, "In the Lord put I my trust."

Have we no similarly inadequate resources which are suggested to the driven soul to-day? The soul is assailed by fierce temptations. It becomes possessed by the feverishness of ambition. It lies exposed to the contagion of the leprosy of avarice. It is the target of the fiery darts of lust. Where may the soul find security? In what defence may a man rest in the strength of peaceful security? What protective ramparts are offered to the soul? The world is not slow to recommend its own fastnesses, its secure heights, its mountain air. I do not despise them, I am grateful for any defensive strength which they may offer to me, but, at the best, their resources are all insufficient. In the best of earth's health resorts one can catch disease. Even the most conspicuously healthy place has its

published death-rate. There are little graveyards even among the Alps. And these mountain heights, which are recommended for the security of men who are persecuted by temptations, and exposed to the assaults of the devil, leave the soul vulnerable at a thousand points.

Look at two or three of these suggested refuges. "Flee as a bird to your mountain." "Take up *literature*!" No one can be more grateful than I for the magnificent defences offered by elevated literature. A healthy book is a strong defence. But if a man immerse himself in the very best literature, he is not necessarily out of the reach of the devil. "Lo, the wicked bend their bow." There are interstices in the most refined and finely-woven literature through which the forces of evil can pour like an atmospheric flood.

"Flee as a bird to your mountain." "Take up *music*!" How grateful we are for the gracious ministry of music. It gives expression to moods of the soul

for which speech is altogether too coarse and imperfect a medium. Music refines the emotions, and helps to lighten and purify the desires. But are its defences adequate? Is the musician out of the range of the evil one? I should say that in this health-resort the death-rate is abnormally high. The jealousies and strifes, and petty envies of musicians, have become a common-place. The love of high-class music frequently cohabits with the lack of moral principle, fostering a dangerous sensationalism, which is often used in shameless lust.

"Flee as a bird to your mountain." "Take up *science or art*!" Here again one is grateful for the invigorating ministry. It is a rare benediction to be led into the wonder and beauty of nature, into the unveiling of her features, and the disclosure of her soul. I know of nothing more helpful, outside the realms of actual fellowship with Christ, than to go out into the country, and engage oneself with the unfolding marvels of the natural world.

Such a habit affords a grand shield for the soul, but the armour is not complete. "The wicked can bend the bow," and discover the soul through many an exposed and unprotected place. The æsthetic cannot subdue the immoral, nor is science a safe-guard against irreverence and impurity. All these suggested strongholds are inadequate. Evil can invade these fastnesses. The air that blows on these heights is a breeder of the microbe of moral disease. "How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?" "In the Lord put I my trust."

III. THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SECURITY.

Upon what then shall the driven soul depend? "*In the Lord put I my trust.*" In Him are the sure foundations of a mighty stronghold. In Him man's security is complete. In the remainder of the Psalm the Psalmist enumerates some of the foundations upon which his joyful confidence is built. I do not wonder that the inspection is accomplished to the

accompaniment of a song. What are some of the stones of the grand foundation?

The Lord's Immanence.—"The Lord is in His Holy Temple." That is the beginning of his confidence. Our God is not an absentee. "The Tabernacle of God is with man." God is very near. We can get at Him, and He can get at us; we can speak to Him, and He will speak to us.

The Lord's Sovereignty.—"The Lord's throne is in the Heaven." We are not under the dominion of chance. Forces are not moving in blindness towards unknown destinies. The Lord governs the coming and going of the night. The clouds accomplish His bidding. He rides upon the storm. "God is in His heaven." That is the second great note in the Psalmist's faith.

The Lord's Discernments.—"His eyes behold, His eyelids try." Our God is a close observer. He is familiar with everything that is happening. Nothing gets the start of Him. He sees things in their germ. He sees conduct when it is only

yet a wish. He sees the finished work when it is only yet a stammering prayer. *Our Lord sees.* All the secret movements of vice and virtue are known to Him. I need have no wonder as to whether He knows the forces that surround me. He knows them all—their measure, their weight, and the power of my endurance. This is another element in the Psalmist's boast.

The Lord's Repulsions.—"The wicked, and him that loveth violence, His soul hateth." The Lord is not passive, He does not stand aloof, and allow things to go by default. He hateth sin. Divine hatred means Divine antagonism. To know that the evil temptation that besets me has God for its antagonist strengthens the nerve and invigorates the will. Evil has God for its antagonist, and for its overthrow the Psalmist waits with fruitful certainty.

The Lord's Purposes.—The wicked haste towards the night. "Upon the wicked He shall rain snares and fire of brimstone,

and horrible tempest." I do not know the full import of these words, but I can catch their drift. The wicked are moving towards destruction! The righteous march towards the dawn! "The upright shall behold His face." They are moving on through tribulation and pain to a quiet and radiant morning. This is the design of God, and in this design the Psalmist builds his faith. Such are the foundations of the Psalmist's security. He will not be overwhelmed. God is with him. The end of all things shall be to him, and to all the faithful, an unspeakably glorious dawn.

THE ROOTS OF THE BLESSED LIFE

TEXT: Psalm 34: 11-14.

"WHAT man is he that desireth life and loveth many days that he may see good?" That is an old-world statement of a persistent problem, but I want to read it without the Old Testament limitations. We have the same problem, but we perhaps give it a slightly different expression. "*What man is he that desireth life?*" Who wants to truly live, to be thoroughly alive, to be lifted above the plain of mere existence, and placed in conditions of amazing vitality and fertility? "*And loveth many days?*" What man is he that desireth a large life, a life of spacious activities, of grand persistence and continuity? "*That he may see good.*" What man is he that desireth a life that will extract the real "good" out of things, that will gather the honey in the hidden

places, that will discover the essences in experiences, and get the marrow out of trifling and apparently inconsiderable events. That is the modern statement of the problem. Who desires to be really alive, abounding in vital energy, possessed of such fine perceptions as will explore all the affairs of life, and discern their secret treasure? In what can we find the life of blessedness, full, spacious, and refined?

The Psalmist's setting of the problem is not without its suggestion. The statement of the spacious life of blessedness, extracting the secret flavours and essences of things, is placed in a very significant context. On the one hand, we have "the fear of the Lord"; on the other hand, "keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile." On the one side is theology, on the other side is morality. The one expresses a certain relationship to God, and the other a certain relationship to man. And between these two, rising out of them, as though from them it

received its nutriment, emerges the life of blessedness with its perception of the finest issues in creation. And therefore the blessed life is like a plant with a twofold root, one root reaching away into union with God, and the other root embedded in pure fellowship with man. Let us look at the two roots.

1. "*The fear of the Lord.*" Now fear is not fearfulness. In seeking an interpretation of the word, we must put aside all ideas of terror, of trembling servitude, of cringing servility. If the content included any element of terror, the spiritual life would be a doleful bondage; but there are strange conjunctions in the Word of God which make this interpretation impossible. What an amazing companionship is to be found in these words:— "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice!" The significance of the passage is just this, that whatever the fear of the Lord may be, it is consistent with the presence of a ceaseless joy. Fear is a disposition

which can lodge in the same heart with delight. The same suggestion is conveyed to us by many passages in the writings of the Apostle Paul. In the Epistle to the Philippians, he emphasises and re-emphasises the duty of rejoicing, and yet in the same Epistle he enjoins his readers to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling." Fear, therefore, is not synonymous with terror, for terror is never the companion of joy.

What, then, can be the inner suggestion of the phrase, "the fear of the Lord!" Let us make an inquest into the word. The primary significance of the term is allied to our conception of reverence. Now reverence implies perception; perception further implies sensitiveness, and in this last word I think we touch the essential content of the biblical word "fear." "The fear of the Lord" is sensitiveness towards the Lord. It is the opposite of hardness, unfeelingness, benumbment. The soul that fears God lies exposed before Him in a sensitiveness

that discerns His most silent approach. The life is like a sensitive plate exposed to the light, and it records the faintest ray. Now carrying this suggestion I get a glimpse of the meaning of some of the great phrases of the word of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Sensitiveness towards God is the beginning of wisdom. Sensitiveness in music is the beginning of musical ability; sensitiveness in art is the beginning of artistic competence. Sensitiveness towards God is the beginning of expertness in the knowledge and doings of God. "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life." This sensitiveness is spoken of as the beginning, as the fountain out of which all riper issues are to proceed.

This sensitiveness towards God is one of the roots of the blessed life. To thrill to His faintest breathings, to hear the still small voice, to catch the first dim light of new revelations, to be exquisitely responsive to the movements of the Father, this is the great primary rootage of a full

and blessed life. Happy is it for the expositor that he is now able to add that this sensitiveness towards God is a gift of God. "I will put my fear in their hearts." By waiting upon the Lord, His refining ministry begins to restore the hardened surfaces of our life, and fills us again with a spirit of rare and exquisite discernment.

2. We turn now to the second suggestion of the roots and sources of the blessed life :—

"*Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*" This appears to be a startling descent from the high plain on which we have just been moving. To pass from the august relationship with God to the controlling of one's speech appears to be an amazing leap. It is stupendously significant that in disclosing the secrets of the blessed life, the Psalmist should immediately turn to the government of the tongue. Our speech is so often destructive of our blessedness. All

speech has a reflex influence. Poison-soaked speech has first of all poisoned the speaker. Every word we speak recoils upon the speaker's heart, and leaves its influence, either in grace or disfigurement. Therefore "keep thy tongue from evil." Hold it in severe restriction. Venom, that passes out, also steeps in. "And thy lips from speaking guile." This is only a slight variation of the former word. Where the lips are treacherous, the heart is ill at ease. Where the lips are untrue, the heart abounds in suspicion. Where the lips have spoken the lie, the heart is afraid of exposure. How, then, can there be blessedness where there is dread? How can there be a quiet and fruitful happiness where poison is impairing the higher powers? "Let nothing proceed out of your mouth but what is good unto edifying." "Neither was any deceit in His mouth."

"*Depart from evil.*" Turn from it. Regard thyself in revolt. Rebel, and remove thyself. Don't play with uncleanness. Don't touch it with thy finger. Don't

hold conversation concerning it, for there are some things of which it is a "shame even to speak." "Depart from evil and *do good.*" The best way to effect a permanent divorce from evil is to exercise one's self in active good. Where there is no positive ministry in goodness, we soon relapse into sin. A positive goodness will make the life invincible. The devil's hardest work is with the souls that are pre-occupied. They are so absorbed in their beautiful labours that they never see his glittering allurements, and are never enticed into the old destructive way. If we want the blessed life, full, safe, and abounding, we must "depart from evil and do good."

"*Seek peace and pursue it.*" Not the peace of quietness, not, at any rate, the quietness of still machinery, but perhaps the smoothness of machinery at work. We have to live together in families, in societies, in nations, as a race. To seek peace is to seek the smooth workings of this complicated fellowship. We are

to labour for right adjustments, equitable fellowships. We are to get the gravel and the grit out of the fine machinery. We are to rid human fellowship of its envy and jealousy and thoughtlessness and ill-will. We are to labour that the companionships of God's children may run smoothly without a wasting and painful friction. "Seek peace *and pursue it.*" We are not to give up the search because we are not immediately successful. We are not to cease to be reformers because the reformation is not gained in a day. We are not to say that society is hopeless because we make such little headway in the work of re-adjustment. We are to "pursue" the great aim, to chase it with all the eagerness of a keen hunter, determined not to relax the search until the mighty end is gained.

Here, then, are some of the secrets of the blessed life—the sensitive union with God and a clean and self-sacrificing fellowship with man. With conversation

sanctified, and conduct purified, and in our daily life the very ministry of the Cross, and, above all, holding high and ceaseless fellowship with the King, we shall know the preciousness and the glory of the blessed life.

THE THINGS OF OTHERS

TEXT: "*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*"—Phil. 2: 4.

"LOOK not every man on his own things," for that would be an imprisoning egotism: "but every man also on the things of others," for that would be a fertile and liberalising altruism. "Look not every man on his own things," or the issue will be pinched and dwarfed individualism: "but every man also on the things of others," and in the resultant collectivism, the individual shall find the conditions of his own ripest growth.

"Look not every man on his own things." It is a warning against the perils of self-centredness. "But every man also on the things of others." It is an appeal for the exercise of the imagination. Imagine the conditions which prevail within the circle of another man's life. Get his point of view. Look at things

through his windows. Survey his outlook. Inspect his treasure. Realise his life. Let the implement of thy exploration be not only a microscope, for the close watching and inspection of thyself, but a telescope, for the discovery and inspection of thy brother. We are to exercise ourselves in the wider vision of imagination, in order that we may realise and understand the immensely complex and varied life which prevails in the common race.

"Look not every man on his own things." But what is the need of the wider vision? The need is this, that even a man's "own things" will not ripen beneath the enticements of a self-centred vision. No man can find adequate nutriment for his own development within the pale of his own life. Even genius is not self-sustaining. If genius is to become full-grown, it must borrow from other men's resources. It is not difficult to name some of the wells from which Shakespeare fetched his water. It is comparatively easy to discover some of the larders from which Wordsworth

borrowed his bread. Their genius needed the stimulus which they found in another man's wealth. And what is true of genius is equally true of the more commonplace life. Life will remain comparatively dormant unless it is breathed upon by the bracing influence of human fellowship. No man can lift his own powers out of comparative babyhood by the strength of his own original resources. We raise our plants into strength, and symmetry and beauty, by placing them in glass houses, which on every side hold fellowship with the spacious sky. And if the seminal powers of our life, the germs of virtue and fine capacity, are ever to become strong and grandly proportioned, it will not have to be in a narrow and walled-in exclusiveness, but in a brotherly communion which on every side holds spacious fellowship with the race. If self is to be realised, it must be in communion with brother. Self and brother will come to their crown in a mutual comprehension. Therefore, "look not every man on his

own things, but every man also on the things of others."

We are called, then, to the ministry of imagination. Now imagination is an ally of sympathy. I think perhaps I have used a most defective figure. The kinship is more vital than that of alliance. I should prefer to say that sympathy is the faculty of which imagination is the function. It is the man of fine sympathy who has the rare discernment. The man devoid of sympathy may see a smile upon the face and think it sunshine. The man of exquisite sympathy sees the smile, but knows it to be a theatrical light, and feels behind the smile the tears that sorrow has shaken into frost. Imagination without sympathy is only surface sight; sympathetic imagination discerns the hidden depths. "Look not every man on his own things," but let every man, with sensitive, sympathetic imagination, look also "on the things of others."

Here, then, is one of the principles of life in the Kingdom of God, the principle

of sympathetic imagination, in the exercise of which the lives of the members are perfected in the strength and beauty of holiness. Let me take the great principle round to one or two of the many aspects of life to which it might be beneficently applied.

1. Call to mind the variety of life represented in a worshipping congregation. We are pacing the way of the pilgrimage at almost every part of the road. There are some who are in the Slough of Despond, and are half inclined to give up the difficult crusade. Others have just passed through the wicket-gate, and have a kind of chequered and trembling rejoicing in the Christian life. Some are climbing the Hill Difficulty and are troubled by the crouching lions, which appear to bar their progress in the distant way. Others are in the Palace Beautiful, resting in the sweet chamber called "Peace," whose window is toward the sun-rising! Some are descending the Valley of Humiliation, and are finding that the descent is more irksome

and trying than the difficult climb. Others are in fierce and deadly combat with Apollyon, encountering some monstrous temptation, which overwhelmingly threatens their life. Some are walking through Vanity Fair, tempted by the glare and glitter of worldly wares, and tried by the seducting offers of fading garlands and tinselled crowns. And others are in the land of Beulah, where the birds sing, and where the sun shines night and day! Some are just at the beginning of the pilgrimage, and all the perils lie before them. Others are just on the brink of the narrow river, and all their dangers lie behind. How varied and many-coloured are our lives! And we come together to worship — to pray and to praise, and to engage in holy fellowship. What do we need? The ardent exercise of the imagination, the ministry of a fervent spiritual sympathy. The man climbing the steep hill must have spiritual sympathy with those in the sunny land of Beulah; and those in the song-filled land of Beulah must have spiritual sympathy

with those who are crossing the lone and desolate plains which are haunted by Apollyon. The man who is in the Slough of Despond must sympathetically recall the one who stands on the hill called "Clear," with its wide and lovely prospects, stretching right away to the celestial gates; and those on the hill called "Clear" must hold spiritual sympathy with those toiling through the deep, dark places of despondency and despair. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

That is the very genius and ministry of Christian communion. I announce a hymn, and it leads us through valleys of shadow and desolation.

> "Speak Lord, and bid celestial peace
> Relieve my aching heart!
> Oh, smile, and bid my sorrows cease,
> And all the gloom depart."

But YOU have no ache and no sorrows and no gloom! How can you sing it? Aye, but hidden here and there in the throng are souls that are just bowed

and crushed in ache and sorrow and gloom, and for them the prayer is a closely appropriate cry. You must exercise your spiritual sympathy, live in your fellows, and sing it for them! "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

I announce another hymn, and it leads us through sunlit meadows and by softly flowing streams.

> "My heart is resting, oh, my God,
> My heart is in Thy care,
> I hear the voice of joy and health.
> Resounding everywhere."

But YOU don't hear the voice of joy and health resounding everywhere! You feel the pressure of sickness and the chill of the shadow! How can you sing it? Aye, but there are here and there in the congregation souls who are just possessed by the sense of the flowing energies of the Holy God; and you must exercise your spiritual sympathy, and sing it for them! "Look not every man on his own things."

Such is the hopefulness of public com-

munion when we minister to one another in sanctified sympathy. It will not impoverish the man who has reached the sunny height to think sympathetically of the man who is toiling at the shadow-haunted base, and it will not add to the burden of the man who is toiling through the cloud to join sympathetically in the jubilant hymn of the man who has reached the light. We are all the richer for a wider comprehension. When we visit one another's hearts in sympathetic ministry we help one another, and we enrich ourselves. The bee that serves the flowers by its visits brings wealth to its own hive. "Look not every man on his own things."

2. Let me take the principle round to another aspect of the common life. Here are a number of so-called sects, ecclesiastical fellow-ships, separated from one another by barriers and divisions. Each has its own peculiar treasure; each has its own peculiar defect. How shall each develop its own worthiest life to finest maturity? By the exercise of a sympathetic imagina-

tion, holding fellowship with the others. "Look not every sect on its own things, but every sect also on the things of others." There is nothing so cramping and belittling as a severe and walled-in sectarianism. Sectarianism, with no windows opening out into wider fellowships, can produce nothing higher than spiritual dwarfs. Whenever I wish to gain an instance of enlightened sectarianism, I turn to the third chapter of the Gospel of St John. "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus." A sectarian, indeed! "The same came to Jesus—" Sectarianism, then, with an open window; sectarianism with a healthy inquisitiveness; sectarianism with a hunger for light! "The same came to Jesus!" Sectarianism in fellowship, seeking treasure beyond itself! "There was a man of the Congregationalists, named ——; the same came to a Methodist!" "There was a man of the Methodists, named ——; the same came to an Episcopalian." "There was a man of the Quakers, named ——; the same came to a Catholic.

"There was a man of the Episcopalians, named ——; the same came to the Salvation Army." "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Should we be the losers by this sympathetic imagination? If we sought to realise one another's positions, to gain one another's point of view, to understand one another's outlook, and to discover one another's purpose and aim, should we be the poorer for the fellowship? If among all the denominations we sought for the largest common denominator, would not the explanation be productive of great spiritual wealth?

Here is a man who is best aided in his devotional life by the ministry of extemporary prayer. Its spontaneity, its informality, its elasticity provide the most welcome vehicle for the expression of his own petitions. Well, now, would it not be well for this man to try to sympathetically imagine a temperament of quite another type, a temperament to which an extemporary prayer is a "rock of offence

and a stone of stumbling," a temperament which requires the calm, unembarrassed procession of prepared speech, and which needs to know, for its own fruitful devotion, the entire line and tendency of the supplicating thought? I say, would it not be well for men of such different temperaments to "look not only on their own things, but also on the things of others," that in their larger fellowship and understanding each might attain unto a richer and more spacious life? If the Ritualist would sympathetically seek to realise the Quaker, and the Quaker the Ritualist, I can foresee nothing but wealthy issues from such an exercise. I am therefore pleading for ecclesiastical sympathies. I am pleading that a man's eyes should travel beyond his own sect. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold." It is in that other fold that I want my imagination to be at work, that out of the more spacious outlook there may arise a more brotherly co-operation in the common work of saving the race.

A TESTIMONY MEETING

TEXT: "*O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto Him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.*"—Psalm 34: 3-7.

"O MAGNIFY the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." It is a call to social worship. It is the cry of a soul possessed by the spirit of praise, and yearning to have fellowship with the thanksgiving of others. "God's praises sound best in concert." The praise that lifts its voice in solitude is beautiful, but it is far more beautiful when heard in communion with the praise of one's fellows. The violin gains something from an accompaniment. Each instrument in the orchestra is enriched by the co-operation of the others. Each member in a chorus

has his discernment sharpened, and his zeal intensified by the remaining members. So it is in the orchestra of praise. My own thanksgiving is quickened and enriched when I join it to the praises of others. My own note is gladdened. My eagerness is inflamed.

> "Come let us *join* our cheerful songs,
> With angels round the throne;
> Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
> But all their joys are one."

In response to this appeal for social worship, the text appears to suggest that a number of thankful souls gathered together, and, each contributing his own testimony of the exceeding graciousness of God, they joined in an outburst of united and jubilant praise. They formed a kind of fellowship meeting for testimony and adoration. Here is one of the testimonies: "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." And here is the gladsome confession of quite a numerous com-

pany. "They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." And here, again, is the witness of an inspired and grateful soul: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Is it any wonder that, after testimonies such as these, there should arise a spontaneous outburst of confident and delightful thanksgiving? "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Let us listen a little more heedfully to the individual testimonies.

"*I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*" What had been this man's burden? It was the burden of "fears." He was easily panic-stricken. He moved in continual trembling. He was afraid of yesterday. He dared not think of the morrow. He shrank from the conception of death. He was surrounded by terrors. He took no step in confidence, afraid that at each step the ground might open beneath his

feet. He was John Bunyan's "Mr Fearing." He was "always afraid that he should come short of whither he had a desire to go." "Everything frightened him that he heard anybody speak of, that had but the least appearance of opposition in it." When he came to the Slough of Despond he "lay moaning for a month together." And "when he was over, he would scarce believe it." He was burdened with "fears." I am afraid that examples of the type would not be difficult to find. There are many people who are not afflicted by calamity, but who are greatly burdened by the fear of it. There are many whose sky is full of light, but who are afraid of the coming night. This would appear to have been the plight of the man to whose confession we are now listening.

What did he make his resource? "*I sought the Lord.*" The seeking was a real business. Into the inquisition he put his whole soul. It was no languid aspiration, no lukewarm search. He "set himself

to seek God." I like that Old Testament phrase. There is an air of business-like intensity about it; it throbs with definite purpose and decided resolve. There is the promise of ultimate triumph in the initial movement. Of this man we shall be able to say, "He that seeketh, findeth."

And what was the issue of the search? "*He heard me.*" The somewhat vague term "heard" scarcely expresses the content of the Psalmist's mind. The significance of the term is more than hearing. It implies heeding and responding. Man's "seeking" was responded to by a sympathetic movement on the part of God. "*And delivered me from all my fears.*" "*He delivered me.*" That is a full-coloured and full-blooded word, abounding in strength and vitality. It suggests the act of rescuing something out of a beast's mouth. As though my "fears" were a pack of wild beasts, and I repeatedly find myself in their jaws. I am daily devoured. My peace is consumed. It is from spiritual havoc of this kind that

our Lord delivers us. "I will deliver my flock from their mouth." The rescue is not partial. The relief is by no means incomplete. The freedom is absolute. "He delivered me from *all* my fears." As an old Puritan commentator put it, "God sweeps the field, slays the enemies, and even buries their bones."

Let us listen to the second of these grateful testimonies. "*They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed.*" The burden which this little company had carried is not mentioned. But I think it is quite easy to infer it from their confession. The gracious answer of God brought a benediction of light. They were "lightened." Then before they must have been darkened. There was no light in their faces. They were cheerless and depressed. They were cast down and melancholic, and inclined to the bondage of despair. They were "losing heart." And what was their resource? "*They looked unto Him.*" They gazed intently upon God. It was no snatch look, no hurried

glances, no passing nod of recognition. It was a fixed and eager gaze. We may apprehend the intensity of the look by calling to mind a strange phrase used by the Prophet Isaiah. "Look, ye blind, that ye may see." The blind are called upon to exert the muscles of their darkened eyes, to stretch them as though they *would* see; and in the strenuous working they should obtain their sight. That is the figure which suggests the kind of "looking" which is fruitful in spiritual vision. They fixed their thought upon God; they held it there, even though the effort were productive of an aching pain. And what was the outcome of their gaze? They "*were lightened.*" They were made to sparkle. They were brightened up, lit up, made cheerful. "Now are ye light in the Lord." Depression gave way to buoyancy. Melancholy yielded to cheerfulness. They became the optimists. One has sometimes seen the windows of a little cottage which faces the sun, shine like burnished gold, as they caught

the glory of the resplendent orb. Every window pane was "lightened" as it confronted the radiant glory. And so with depressed souls and their Maker. If we bring ourselves face to face with the Sun of Righteousness, and remain in the fruitful attitude, contemplating "as in a mirror the glory of the Lord," we shall be "transformed into the same image from glory to glory." And "*their faces were not ashamed.*" There was the light of conquerors in their eyes. The cloud of anticipated defeat was dispersed. "Their faces were covered with joy, but not with blushes." They were "children of the light."

Let us now turn to the third of these witnesses, and hear his thankful confession. "*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.*" And what had been this man's peculiar burden? It is described under the spacious word "troubles." It is possible, perhaps, to give a little more definiteness to its content. It is literally suggestive of

"tightness." He had been in a "tight corner," "a tight place." He hadn't known how to turn; he was shut in, in straits and imprisonment. We are not told what particular shape the affliction had taken. It is sufficient to us to know that the man was at bay, and could discover no means of escape. In his straits he "cried unto the Lord." It was a short, sharp, urgent prayer. There is a phrase in one of Rutherford's letters which it may be useful to quote just here. "Fervour is a heavenly ingredient in prayer; an arrow drawn with full strength hath a speedier issue; therefore the prayers of saints are expressed by crying in Scripture." This was the kind of arrow-prayer that sprang from the tense feelings of this imprisoned soul. Again we have the confession made by an earlier witness. "The Lord heard him," paid heed to him, and began the ministry of gracious response. "*He saved him out of all his troubles.*" He opened a way out of the tight place. He led him out of straits into freedom.

He gave him a sense of space. "Thou hast brought my feet into a large place."

It is little wonder that testimonies like these, leaping out of grateful hearts, should find their issue in a song, which is both Gospel and praise! "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." The witnesses are generalising their own experiences, and proclaiming a Gospel for all men. The Lord of all is willing to become the life-guard of each. He will pitch His tents round about us, and within those gracious defences our security will become complete. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people." Behind those glorious ramparts the man of "fears" may find deliverance, the man of depression may find "lightening," and the man of troubles may discover a wealthy freedom.

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